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Thesis

WILLIAM COBBETT: HIS YOUTH AND AMERICAN CAREER

by

Marian Dolores Browne
Regis College (A.B., 1931)

submitted in partial fulfilment of the
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The period after the Revolution was one in which a growing sense of nationalism gradually began to find itself. At the same time the new nation split politically into two great parties differing in their economic, political, and social views. The split was based very largely on the age old antagonism between debtor and creditor classes.

In America, the Federalist party was representative largely of the creditor class; and since the men who composed it had been the ones who formed the Constitution and controlled the new government Federalist ideas had been impressed on the new structure. The party numbered among its adherents the solid financial and mercantile interests of the nation, and it was especially strong in the commercial cities of the seaboard. Its membership tended, therefore, to orientate it toward Great Britain to whom the greater part of American commerce went. Formed by a trading and propertied class the party was by nature conservative in its political ideas; it was not too greatly enamored of democracy, in fact, its leaders often did not hesitate to assert that "mankind, when left to themselves, are unfit for their own government."[1] In fact, the Feder-

1. For further material see Beveridge, A. J. Life of John Marshall, I, pp. 288-318.

alists looked more and more to England as their model in political matters.

In opposition to the Federalists had arisen a party called at first the Anti-Federalists and which then took the more euphonious name of Democratic Republicans or simply Republicans. Its fundamental raison d'etre was its representation of the debtor class. Since agriculturists from time immemorial have always belonged to this class, the great part of the Republicans were farmers and planters, although it had in its ranks urban wage earners as well. Led by Thomas Jefferson it took on his political views tending toward democracy in government. It was its urban element which especially followed Jefferson's lead in his admiration for the principles of the new French Republic. It seemed to them that the French Revolution was carrying out the highest aims of democracy and equality.

And precisely in the measure with which the Republicans lost themselves in wild rapture over the progress of the French Revolution, so did the Federalists lose themselves in a terrible rage and abhorrence of all that the Revolution stood for. As much as the Republicans vicariously took pleasure in the French activities, so the Federalists feared that the like might occur here. Led by Hamilton the Federalists attempted to stem the spread in Americaof what they considered the dreadful and subversive French doctrines.

Thomas Paine again rose to the defence of the Revolution and published the first part of his great apology for democracy - The Rights of Man. An American edition was bought with avidity. With great swiftness the Anti-Federalists organized a net-work of democratic societies modeled on the French political clubs. To the Federalists these clubs must have appeared as the "committees of correspondence" did to the British less than two decades earlier. Great banquets and town meetings held to celebrate victories of the radical parties in the French Revolution further alarmed the Federalists. It is difficult to picture the astonishing enthusiasm with which a large part of the American people accepted the new French ideas of fraternity and equality. The Federalists became actually hysterical with fright.

The quarrel became even fiercer when it turned from theories to actualities. American commerce had now become involved in the war between England and France. The navies of both nations preyed on American shipping, but the Federalists could see only the wrongs committed by the French, while the Republicans were concerned over English depredations. The climax was reached when the French Republic appealed for aid against England under the old treaty of friendship and alliance of 1778. The appeal was hearkened to by the Republicans, but the conservative men at the helm of affairs felt that the times called for discretion. Hamilton and Washington were bent on keeping their young country out of war, and Washington issued his proclamation of neutrality in 1793 and later

refused to accede to the demands of Citizen Genet. It seemed as if the wrath of the opposition knew no bounds, but it was still further augmented by the Federalist policy of seeking a commercial alliance with England.

After the Revolution journalism had resumed normal conditions. Mail was once more carried, and paper was once more procurable. The local disputes furnished fuel for editorial fires, and then newspaper writers plunged eagerly into the struggle over the adoption of the Constitution. This momentous question was no sooner settled than the rise of political parties gave American journalism a new field of activity. Along with the newspapers innumerable pamphlets besieged the attention of the American reader and carried on acrimonious debates on all the topics of the day. There was no change in the general character of newspapers directly after the War of the Revolution. The ridicule, coarse satire, and the bitterness of war-time journalism was carried over into this period.

As the factional struggles became more heated new papers appeared until every town and village of any size had its press. Thirty-six newspapers had survived the Revolution; by 1789 there were one hundred and the number increased until 1810 saw three hundred and sixty of them. There were two marked advances, however, just after the war. These were the establishment of new

papers and changes in the frequency of publication from weekly to semi-weekly, tri-weekly, and daily issues. The first daily was the Pennsylvania Packet and Daily Advertiser which had been the tri-weekly Pennsylvania Packet and General Advertiser. The daily first appeared on September 21, 1784. Six months later appeared the New York Daily Advertiser.

The press adapted itself readily to party rivalry and this became the great period of political journalism. The relaxing of the libel laws added to the flames of animosity. The editorial had not reached its present form, and its place was supplied by letters, often anonymous, to the editor written by political leaders.

Newspapers became increasingly important as media for the presentation of the arguments of political factions as the Federalist and Anti-Federalist parties developed. The Federalist first appeared as a series of letters in the New York Independent Journal; or General Advertiser from October 27, 1787 to April, 1788. The usefulness of the newspaper as a party organ made itself evident. Thus in 1789 the Gazette of the United States was established in New York by Alexander Hamilton as the Federalist organ, and first appeared on April 15. Its editorship was entrusted to John Fenno a Boston school teacher who was recommended for his literary ability. The selection of Fenno is indicative of a change in the editing of newspapers. Fenno considered himself the "editor" of his paper, not as the printer or publisher.

Fenno endeavored to make the Gazette a "National, Impartial and Independent Conveyancer to all parts of the Union, of News, Politics and Miscellanies." Fenno admitted plainly that the purpose of the Gazette was to uphold the government and to "endear" it to the people. Hamilton, under various pen names was a leading contributor. The work of other Federalists also appeared, especially that of Vice-President Adams.

At the end of six months the paper had a circulation of 650, and at the end of two years claimed 1400,[1] although the figure was later admitted to be only 1000, with 120 sent gratis to postmasters and printers. In 1790 the headquarters of the paper was moved to Philadelphia when the Federal capital was moved there. Fenno had great financial difficulty in maintaining the Gazette, and in 1793 was enabled to continue only through a loan of $2000 raised in New York and Philadelphia by Hamilton and Rufus King.

In 1790 Jefferson returned from France and became the leader of the Republican Party. Jefferson realiz ed the need of a party press and consequently lent his support to Philip Freneau and encouraged him to start the National Gazette. Freneau, famous for his Revolutionary poems, was given a position in the State Department by Jefferson and drew a small salary from the Government for his services as an interpreter of French. Jefferson was harshly attacked for thus subsidizing an opposition or-

1. Pleyer, W. G. Main Currents in the History of American Journalism. p. 107.

gan with Government funds. On the other hand Fenno received a government printing subsidy of $2500.00, while Freneau received only $250.00 as part time Clerk of Foreign Languages. Freneau's verse had a satirical turn which was just the weapon that Jefferson needed. Freneau was one of many editors who were political refugees from Europe.

Freneau at once began to dramatise and personalise the contest. He singled out Hamilton to attack as the leader of a plot to establish a monarchy. In addition he vigorously attacked Hamilton's funding system, his national bank, his proposed perpetual public debt, and his advocacy of the extension of the powers of the Federal government. Hamilton at first let Fenno answer, which he did by hurling vain epithets. Most of the Federalist editors were as weak in their replies, and it was not until Cobbett entered the lists on their side that the Republicans were worsted in this kind of a battle. In 1792 Hamilton undertook to answer Freneau and began to write under a fictitious signature. He asked whether Freneau's salary was for service or propaganda. After an exchange of sallies, Hamilton charged a plot between Freneau and Jefferson. This charge led to Jefferson's withdrawal from the Cabinet in 1793, and Frneau's withdrawl from his clerkship. A few months later, deprived of support, the National Gazette expired.

Other Republican organs continued to assail the Federalists and their policies. The Federalists complained at the abusive diatribes in the opposition papers. Washington's feelings were deeply wounded by the attacks upon him. In return Jefferson was daily charged with "being an atheist, a leveler, an agrarian, an anarchist, a democrat, a demagogue -- all synonyms for criminality in the Federalist camp."[1]

With the demise of the National Gazette the Aurora of Philadelphia became the Republican organ. Benjamin Franklin Bache, grandson of Benjamin Franklin, was its editor. In the Aurora appeared most of the attacks upon "Peter Porcupine" or William Cobbett. Cobbett had become the champion of the Federalists and cheerfully bore the brunt of the Republican attack returning each blow with interest. So vociferous and doughty a champion did he become, that at length he embarassed even his own party. In the campaigns so scurrilous that they pass modern belief Cobbett excelled and out-roared his opponents. The quarrel between the Aurora and Cobbett marked the climax of this type of journalism. After it the tone of the press became less vicious; and the press began to assume an aspect more like that of today.

1. Beard, Charles A., and Mary R. Rise of American Civilization. I, p. 505.

CHAPTER II

WILLIAM COBBETT'S EARLY CAREER

Through the American scene which we have briefly sketched there swept a strange presence, turbulent, fiery, and of lasting influence. Into the struggle between the Federalist party and the Democratic Republican party there was interjected a new personality whose activities on the part of the Federalists heightened the acrimony of the quarrels over political differences and left a lasting impression on American journalism.

William Cobbett had landed at Philadelphia in October, 1792. But Philadelphia was the second stage of his exile from his homeland. France had been his first refuge in his flight from his native land.

He was born at Franham, Surrey, on March 9, 1763.[1] His father was a farmer and also landlord of the "Jolly Farmer." Cobbett's ancestors were plain peasantry; good stock from which he derived a healthy and vigorous body and an independent, though stubborn, mind. William went to work at an early age.[2]

His early education was meager. Of it, he says:

> I have some faint recollection of going to school to an old woman, who, I believe did not

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1. Cobbett himself always gave 1766 as the year of his birth. This is impossible for he was baptised on April 1, 1763. Carlyle has done considerable research on this point. Cf Carlyle, p. 45, Appendix A.
2. Life and Adventure of Peter Porcupine. pp. 20-21. All references to this work are made from a new modern edition by G. D. H. Cole. This edition contains as well several other of Cobbett's writings to which reference will be made as under the same title.

> succeed in learning me my letters. In the winter evenings my father learnt us all to read and write, and gave us a pretty tolerable knowledge of arithmetic. Grammar he did not perfectly understand himself, and therefore his endeavours to learn us that necessarily failed; for though he thought he understood it, and though he made us get the rules by heart, we learnt nothing at all of the principles.[1]

Cobbett had early acquired a love of gardens, a feeling which remained with him throughout life. It was the lack of gardens in America that he later severely criticized. When he was about fourteen years old he heard of the famous Kew gardens at Richmond and determined that he would work there. On the very next day he set out for Richmond taking with him only thirteen halfpence. He reached Richmond in the afternoon with threepence in his pocket. Here occurred a significant event: Cobbett became acquainted with Swift who was to serve as his model in his own writing.

> . . .With this for my whole fortune, I was trudging through Richmond, in my blue smock-frock and my red garters tied under my knees, when, staring about me, my eye fell upon a little book in a bookseller's window, on the outside of which was written: "Tale of a Tub; Price 3d." The title was so odd, that my curiosity was excited. I had the threepence, but, then, I could have no supper. In I went, and got the little book, which I was so impatient to read, that I got over into a field, at the upper corner of Kew Gardens, where there stood a hay-stack. On the shady side of this, I sat down to read. The book was so different from anything that I had ever read before: it was something so new to my mind, that, though I could not understand some of it, it delighted me beyond description. . . .[2]

Cobbett treasured this copy of the Tale of a Tub for twenty-years, and its loss gave him "greater pain than" he "ever felt at losing thousands of pounds."

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1. Ibid. p. 21.
2. Ibid. (A Retrospect) pp. 139-140. Political Register, February 19, 1820.

His first experience with politics came at about this time as he listened to discussions about the American Revolution.

> After the American war had continued for some time, and the cause and nature of it began to be understood, or rather misunderstood, by the lower classes of the people in England, we became a little better acquainted with (i. e. politics). It is well known, that the people were, as to numbers, nearly equally divided in their opinions concerning that war and their wishes respecting the result of it. My father was a partisan of the Americans: he used frequently to dispute on the subject with the gardener of a nobleman who lived near us. This was generally done with good humour over a pot of our best ale; yet the disputants sometimes grew warm and gave way to language that could not fail to attract our attention. My father was worsted without doubt, as he had for antagonist a shrewd and sensible old Scotchman, far his superior in political knowledge; but he pleaded before a partial audience: we thought that there was but one wise man in the world and that one was our father. He who pleaded the cause of the Americans had an advantage, too, with young minds: he had only to represent the king's troops as sent to cut the throats of a people, our friends and relations, merely because they would not submit to oppression; and his cause was gained. Speaking to the passions is ever sure to succeed on the uninformed.[1]

The ideas and sentiments implanted in young Cobbett's mind by these discussions concerning America were later to cause him to seek the New World as a haven for refuge after his first unsuccessful conflict with the forces of corruption in his native land. Yet these fixed ideas were to cause him considerable trouble for they were of an idealistic nature, and when they came into contact with the real situation a disappointment and disgust so bitter ensued that Cobbett was unable to appreciate what had been accomplished in America. Cobbett was unable to

1. Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine. p. 22.

change his ideas; stubbornness was his one great fault. Recognizing it in himself, he still refused to admit it a fault and attempted to change it into a virtue.

Cobbett returned to his father's farm where he remained for a few years. He became dissatisfied with the narrow farm life after a time and sought to escape into a wider world. When he was nineteen a visit to Portsmouth led him to believe that he would like to be a sailor, but the captain of the ship on which he wished to recruit refused to accept him misunderstanding the motives that actuated the boy.[1] But he was still determined to quit the farm.

On May 6, 1783 he set forth to attend a fair at Guilford. As he crossed the road, however, which led to London, he saw the London post-chaise come over the summit of a near-by hill over which the road led. Five minutes later the coach reached him. In that five minutes Cobbett had decided to go to London. This action is characteristic of Cobbett; he did not need anyone to make up his mind for him. He made decisions rapidly and without advice or consultations. Throughout his life he played the lone hand, and one is impressed as the story of his life unfolds by an atmosphere of isolation which seems to hover about him. He stands forth so sharply from his background that he seems to have no association of a co-operative nature with those about him.

He had with him about three or four crown and half-crown pieces, but these rapidly melted before his expenses in London. Luckily on the chaise he had met a friend of

1. Ibid. p. 26.

his father, who took him into his home and later secured him a position as a copyist for a lawyer in Gray's Inn. Here he spent eight or nine unhappy months. The work was disagreeable to him, the rooms in which he worked were wretched, and he longed for companionship. Looking about him for a more congenial environment he determined to join the marine corps. However, by error he enlisted in the infantry.[1]

Cobbett spent seven years in the army. The first year was spent at Chatham, his regimental station. The other six years were spent abroad, practically the whole of the time in New Brunswick. He was made a corporal while at Chatham, and within a year of his arrival in New Brunswick he became sergeant-major of his regiment.

During his year at Chatham he set out upon the task of acquiring a complete mastery of English grammar and composition. Lowth's Grammar was his text-book. He "wrote the whole grammar out two or three times;" he memorized it, repeating it every morning and evening, and, on guard duty, repeated it once every time he was posted sentinel. The work taught him to write correctly, and trained his memory to the prodigious feats which he accomplished later.[2] Not content with the grammar alone, he joined a circulating library. "The library was not very considerable, it is true, nor in my reading was I directed by any degree of taste or choice. Novels, plays, history, poetry, all were read, and nearly all with equal avidity."[3]

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1. Ibid. pp. 31-32.
2. Cole, G. D. H. Life of William Cobbett. New York. 1924. p. 29.
3. Life and Adventure of Peter Porcupine. p. 33.

Of his officers' ignorance Cobbett has much to say, although it was because of their ignorance that Cobbett was able to gain his promotion. Upon him fell all the clerical work of the regiment, and as a reward for this he enjoyed certain privileges. For the rank and file he had a higher regard. Thus "when raised to a position of comparative importance in the regiment he did not forget the hardships from which he had suffered while a private soldier, and as his knowledge of regimental affairs became greater, he was convinced that those hardships were principally caused by the embezzlement and the connivance of the officers."[1] He learned among other things that the quarter-master was keeping back about one-fourth of the supplies from the men. So indignant was Cobbett at this that he tells us that from this time on he began to collect materials for an exposure when the regiment should return to England. Having access to the regimental accounts, he spent many nights making transcripts of various accounts. He enlisted a corporal into his project needing a witness to authenticate his copies. The danger was considerable, for had they been discovered they would have probably been severely flogged as well as demoted.[2]

The regiment returned to England in 1791. Cobbett immediately applied for his discharge although he had an excellent chance of obtaining a commission. On January 14,

1. Carlyle, E. I. William Cobbett. London. 1904. p. 27.
2. Cole's ed. of Life and Adventures. pp. 129-131.

1792 he wrote to Sir George Yonge, Secretary of War, making grave charges of misuse and misappropriation of funds by officers of his regiment, and enclosed a letter of petition to the King. On January 24 he was given an interview and promised a reply in a day or two. On February 10, having received no reply, he wrote again stating that his means were small and he could not afford to remain long in London. On February 15, he was told that the officers he had accused would be tried only pa rt of the charges he had preferred and even of these, he says, "the parts most material were omitted." He protested to Pitt against the removal of the trial to Portsmouth where he felt that neither he nor his witnesses would be safe from violence. Upon this direct appeal to Pitt on March 7, the trial was removed to London.

This encounter with bureaucracy, official red-tape, and dishonesty seriously discouraged Cobbett. The system he had intended to unmask was not peculiar to his regiment; it extended throughout the entire service. Powerful interests were arrayed against him. He was unable to use the extracts he had made since Corporal William Bestland, his witness, had been unable to secure his discharge, and Cobbett was pledged both by a promise and by ordinary humanity not to implicate him while a subject to military discipline. Despite Cobbett's urging, Younge did not secure the regimental books to prevent their being tampered with. Cobbett learned also that witnesses were being prepared to swear that at an entertainment given him before his departure from the regiment he had drunk "the

destruction of the House of Brunswick."

Cobbett was convinced that he was in serious danger, and went into hiding. The court-martial met without him and acquitted the accused officers. Cobbett's conduct was later subjected to severe criticism. But had he persisted, he would probably have failed to secure an impartial hearing, and had he not established his accusations, the consequences for him would have been serious. Cobbett cannot be accused of lack of courage, "but he was not of the temperament of which martyrs are made. When he thought he had a reasonable prospect of victory, he was ready to encounter great dangers, but to risk ruin without that prospect, in order to preserve his integrity, was beyond him, and, indeed, he would have condemned such conduct as an act of folly."[1]

While Cobbett had awaited the trial he had issued a small pamphlet called The Soldier's Friend; or, Considerations on the late pretended Augmentation of the Subsistence of the Private Soldier. The pamphlet was very effective-- it was charged with having caused the mutiny at Nore in 1797-- and foreshadowed Cobbett's later career.

At about the same time - in February, he had married at Woolwick to Ann Reid, the daughter of an artillery sergeant. He had met her in America when she was thirteen and he twenty-one. She returned with her parents four years before Cobbett. Cobbett gave her his savings of

1. Carlyle, E. I. William Cobbett. London. 1904. p. 32.

one hundred and fifty guineas to get comfortable lodgings, but when he finally joined her he found her working for five pounds a year, and his savings kept intact. The marriage proved to be a very happy one.

It may be, too, that solicitude for his young bride made him reluctant to fact the consequences of sustaining his charges at the court-martial. At any rate, towards the end of March, 1792, he fled his native country and landed at Calais.

He stayed at Tilques, a village near St. Omer, for five months. During this time he endeavored to perfect his knowledge of the French language. But as the Revolution progressed, he saw that war between France and England was inevitable, and he resolved to leave at once for America. As we have seen above, he reached Philadelphia in October, 1792, and lived for a time at Wilmington, then only a little port on the Delaware, twenty-eight miles below Philadelphia. Here he was joined by his wife who had not shared his hurried flight to France.

CHAPTER III

ENTRY INTO AMERICAN POLITICS

While in France, Cobbett had met Mr. Short, the American Ambassador at Paris. From him he had obtained a letter of introduction and recommendation to Thomas Jefferson who was at this time Secretary of State. He forwarded Short's letter to Jefferson on November 2, 1792, with a letter of his own in which he suggested that a Government office might be found for him.

Jefferson replied to the letter with the following:

> Philadelphia, November 5, 1792.
>
> Sir,-- In acknowledging the receipt of your favor of the 2nd instant, I wish it were in my power to announce to you any way in which I could be useful to you. Mr. Short's assurance of your merit would be a sufficient inducement to me. Public Offices in our Government are so few, and of so little value, as to offer no resource to your talents. When you shall have been here some small time, you will be able to judge in what way you can set out with the best prospect to success, and if I can serve you in it, I shall be very ready to do it. -- I am, Sir, your very humble servant.
>
> Th. Jefferson.[1]

One is led to wonder what the result would have been on Cobbett's subsequent career had Jefferson secured him a position in the government service. That he would have remained in sympathy with Jefferson and the Democrats is highly improbable. Cobbett would probably

1. Life and Adventures. pp. 41-42.

have struck the same course that he eventually did. He had certain notions and opinions running contrary to those of Jefferson, and Cobbett was not the man to change his ideas. He clung stubbornly to any idea he acquired and rarely changed his opinions. "He still retained the beliefs and prejudices of his childhood, and with Cobbett throughout life every belief was a prejudice."[1]

Since Cobbett needed funds to take care of his small family, he set himself up as a teacher of English to French refugees. He made his home at 81 Callowhill Street in Philadelphia and taught there. He found many pupils, for events in France caused thousands to flee into exile, and he was able to make about one hundred and forty dollars per month. Cobbett's didactic nature was well developed and he enjoyed this work. From the experience he gained while teaching he wrote his celebrated grammar, Le Tuteur Anglais, for teaching French people English. The first edition of this appeared in 1795; it went into innumerable editions for about fifty years thereafter.

But Cobbett could not forget his homeland and America ever remained alien to him. In a letter to England dated July 6, 1794, he said:

> This country is good for getting money, that is to say if a person is industrious and enterprising. In every other respect the country is miserable. Exactly the contrary of what I expected. The land is bad, rocky; houses wretched; roads impassable after the least rain. Fruit in quantity,

1. Carlyle, E. I. William Cobbett. London. 1904. p. 44.

> but good for nothing. One apple or peach in England or France is worth a bushel of them here. The seasons are detestable. All is burning or freezing. There is no spring or autumn. . . . The people are worthy of the country -- cheating, sly, roguish gang. Strangers make fortunes in spite of all of this, particularly the English. The natives are by nature idle, and seek to live by cheating, while foreigners, being industrious seek no other means than those dictated by integrity, and are sure to meet with encouragement even from the idle and roguish themselves; for however roguish a man may be, he always loves to deal with an honest man. In the fall of the year almost every person, in every place, has a spell of the fever, that is called fall fever. . . Every month has its particular malady. . . In short, the country altogether is detestable.[1]

The prejudice and the type of reasoning in the passage just quoted are indicative of Cobbett at his worst. Imperfect observation, reasoning from false premises, and drawing generalities from specific instances marred his work. Perhaps he wrote this passage in a spirit of bitterness, for his two year old son had just died and another child had been still-born. But in other respects Cobbett had nothing to complain of concerning his treatment in America, and certainly an infant's hold on life anywhere on earth at that period was precarious.

Despite the fact that Cobbett had had to flee from England, he was still English at heart. Nothing had disturbed him thus far in America, and it was, curiously because of the remarks of another exile like himself from

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1. Melvill, pp. 85-88.

his native England that he now slipped back into character.

The occasion was the arrival of Joseph Priestley in America. Priestley's fame today rests upon his work on the chemistry and physics of gases in which fields he was a pioneer. Contemporaneously, he was better known for his liberal and even radical theories of religion and government, and his espousal of the cause of the French Revolution. Priestley had suffered in the Birmingham Riot of 1791 in which the mob, taking him as one of the organizers of a banquet held in celebration of the Fall of the Bastille and one of the authors of a republican handbill burned his house among many others. Priestley was considerably shocked by this display of violence in sedate England, and the idea of removing to American which he had first considered in 1772 strengthened into determination. He arrived with his family in New York on June 12, 1794. He was welcomed vociferously by the Democrats, and at a banquet tendered him by the Democratic Society made the speech which so angered Cobbett.

Cobbett tells us[1] that he nearly missed hearing anything about Priestley since "newspapers were a luxury" for which he had "little relish". One cannot but believe, however, that Cobbett was bound to enter into the American political arena sooner or later, and that Priestley's arrival merely precipitated his entry. At any rate, one of Cobbett's French pupils brought with him as a basis for an exercise in translation a copy of a newspaper containing an account of the Democratic Society's banquet. He and the

1. Political Register. Sept. 29, 1804.

Frenchman disputed the matter, and he determined to write a pamphlet in defense of his country.

The result was a pamphlet which he called Tartuffe Detected, or, Observations on Priestley's Emigration. The problem of a publisher for it then presented itself. The two principal booksellers of Philadelphia were Thomas Bradford and Mathew Carey. Since Bradford was known for his Democratic views and his hatred of Great Britain, Cobbett, therefore first offered his Observations to Carey. The latter refused to publish it, however, and Cobbett was forced to take it to Bradford. Bradford saw its sales possibilities and agreed to publish it, although he wanted to know if it could not be made more agreeable to popular taste and opinion, since he feared that its publication in its present form would seriously endanger the windows of his shop. Cobbett refused. "I never was of an accommodating disposition", he states, and he spoke very truly. He did finally consent to the ommission of the first part of the title, and the pamphlet appeared merely as Observation on Priestley's Emigration. His name did not appear on the title page, nor was his authorship made public.

As to the force and ability with which the pamphlet was written various opinions prevail. Melville says:

> The Observations are well written. It is indeed, one of the most amazing things in connection with this astonishing man that in this, his first essay in polemical literature, he showed his mastery of the art of controversy; his style was mature, his marshaling of arguments admirable, his assault well-directed, and his power of denunciation undeniable. . . .[1]

1. Melville, Lewis. Life and Letters of William Cobbett in England and America. London. 1913. 2 vols. I, p. 94.

The view of another biographer is more accurate. He says:

> The pamphlet is a violent assault on Priestley and the French Revolution. It shows little knowledge of either, but possesses considerable controversial power of a rough kind. . . .[1]

The pamphlet deserves some examination at length since it is so typical of all of Cobbett's writings. It is interesting also as the first of his political pamphlets, since The Soldier's Friend cannot be reckoned as such.

Cobbett states that:

> When the arrival of Doctor Priestley in the United States was first announced, I looked upon His emigration (like the supposed treat of Cowley to his imaginary Paradise, the Summer Islands) as no more than the effect of that weakness, that delusive caprice, which too often accompanies the decline of life, and which is apt, by a change of place, to flatter age with a renovation of faculties and a return of departed genius.

He had thus completely blasted Priestley even before he takes up the latter's arguments. This procedure is the usual one of Cobbett, indeed of all pamphleteers and writers of this type. The character or ability of the person is attacked in place of an attack on the contentions.

> Viewing him as a man that sought repose, my heart welcomed him to the shores of peace, and wished him what he certainly ought to have wished himself, a quiet obscurity. But his answers to the addresses of the Democratic and other Societies at New York, place him in quite a different light, and subject him to the animadversions of a public, among whom they have been industriously propagated.

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1. Carlyle, E. I. William Cobbett. London, 1904. p. 45.

Cobbett especially took offence at Priestley's remark that he hoped to find in the United States "that protection from violence which laws and government promise in all countries, but which he has not found in his own." Priestley was referring here to the burning of his home in Birminham on July 14, 1791 by an unruly anti-Jacobin mob aroused against his championing of the French Revolution by the reports coming from France. They riot lasted for four or five days until the arrival of soldiery to put it down. The rioters were punished, two or three of them being executed.

> Some time after the riots, the Doctor and the other revolutionists[1] who had had property destroyed, brought their actions for damages against the town of Birmingham.
>
> The Doctor laid his damages at 4112 l. 11s. 9 d. sterling, of which sum 420 l. 5 s. was for works in manuscript, which, he said, had been consumed in the flames. The trial of this cause took up nine hours: the jury gave a verdict in his favor, but curtailed the damages to 2502 l. 18 s. It was rightly considered that the imaginary value of the manuscript works ought not to have been included in the damages; because the Doctor being the author of them, he in fact possessed them still, and the loss could be little more than a few sheets of dirty paper. Besides, if they were to be estimated by those he had published some years before, their destruction was a benefit instead of a loss, both to himself and his country. The sum, then, of 420 l. 15 s. being deducted, the damages stood at 3701 l. 16 s. 9 d.: and it should not be forgotten, that even a great part of this sum was charged for an apparatus of philosophical instruments, which in spite of the most unpardonable gasconade of the philosopher, can be looked upon as a thing of imaginary value only, and ought not to be estimated at its <u>cost</u>, any more than a collection of shells, insects, or any other of the <u>frivola</u> of a virtuoso.

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1. The use of this work is hardly consistent unless by it he means a sympathizer of the French Revolution. Such usage is misleading, but typical of his style.

Having in this ready fashion disposed of Priestley's claim for damages, Cobbett passes on to an examination of the riot and its cause. It was caused, he claims, by an inflammatory hand bill issued by the club of which Priestley was the leader.

> . . . But it has been said, that there was nothing offensive in this inflammatory hand bill; because, forsooth, "the matter of it (however indecent and untrue) was not more virulent than Paine's Rights of Man, Mackintosh's Answer to Burke, Remarks on the Constitution of England, &c. &c., which had been lately published without incurring the censure of the Government." So, an inflammatory performance, acknowledged to be indecent and untrue, is not offensive, because it is not more virulent than some other performances which have escaped the censure of the Government! If this is not a new manner of arguing, it is at least an odd one. But this hand bill had something more malicious in it, if not more virulent, than even the inflammatory works above mentioned. They were more difficult to come at; to have them, they must be bought. They contained something like reasoning, the fallacy of which the Government was very sure would be detected by the good sense of those who took the pains to read them. A hand bill was a more commodious instrument of sedition: it was calculated to have an immediate effect. . . .

Cobbett was violent in his hatred of the French Revolution. The Fall of the Bastille was to him only the "inglorious triumphs of a mob."

> . . .The 14th of July was a day marked with the blood of the innocent, and eventually the destruction of an empire. The events of that day must strike horror to every heart except that of a deistical philosopher, and would brand with eternal infamy any other nation but France; which, thanks to the benign influence of the Rights of Man, has made such a progress in ferociousness, murder, sacrilege, and every species of infamy that the horrors of the 14th of July are already forgotten.

He then compares the events of the Reign of Terror in France with the riot of the Birmingham mob, and as a result of this comparison commends the mob. "In short," says Cobbett, "in whatever light we view the Birmingham riots, we can see no object that excites our compassion, except the inhabitants of the hundred, and the unfortunate rioters themselves."

The following is typical of the reasoning Cobbett uses:

> Either he [Priestley] foresaw the consequences of the French Revolution, or he did not foresee them: if he did not, he must confess that his penetration was far inferior to that of his countrymen; for they all foresaw them. If he did foresee them, he ought to blush at being called the "friend of human happiness;" for, to foresee such dreadful calamities, and to form a deliberate plan for bringing them upon his country, he must have a disposition truly diabolical. If he did not foresee them, he must have an understanding little superior to that of an idiot; if he did he must have the heart of a Marat. Let him chose.

In this piece of erroneous reasoning he has begged the whole question by the phrase "consequences of the French Revolution." The pamphlet continues in the same style to attack all that Priestley had said. Priestley is held up as the personification of the French Revolution, and against him is hurled the charge of atheism. It ends with a sentence putting Priestley in his proper place for eternity.

> . . . Perhaps a cobler, with his hammer and awls, is a more valuable acquisition to America than a dozen philosophi - theologi - politi -cal empirics, with all their boasted apparatus.

CHAPTER IV

ANTI-DEMOCRATIC PAMPHLETS

The attack on Priestley met a varied reception. The Democrats fell upon it with execration. Among the Ultra Federalists it gained him the support of a powerful and energetic group who were "strongly imbued with English opinions and institutions."[1] Although as we shall see, Cobbett ultimately injured this party by his extremely violent opinions and his refusal to become naturalized -- a circumstance which enabled to charge this upholder of Federalist and pro-English doctrines as being a mere foreign adventurer-- at the time he rendered great service. "Until that time the Democrats had been pre-eminently the popular party, noted for the dexterity with which they employed the powerful weapons of violence and invective: they had been accustomed to shout down their opponents with clamor and abuse."[1] In Cobbett, however, they met their master in these abilities. As yet Cobbett wrote anonymously.

The replies to the Observations were like the smell of battle to an old war-horse. Cobbett had at last found his milieu. Here was a fine battle raging, and one moreover in which one party was bitterly and savagely attacking his native land. And this same party was

1. Carlyle. p. 48.

championing the cause of the despised republicans in France. It was a situation made to order for Cobbett's temperament and his style of writing. Above all he resented the attacks upon England, and according to his own statement it was these that he set himself to answer:

> I can truthfully say that I lived not for myself, or my family, but exclusively for my country and my King. I enjoyed nothing that the world calls pleasure, fortune was entirely neglected, and personal safety but little attended to.
>
> I met every adversary that appeared against my country; defended it against every accusation; eposed its secret and chastened its open enemies; emboldened its friends to speak, and stilled the madness of the crowd. In that city where, when I started on my career, an Englishman was ashamed to own his country, where my life had been a hundred times threatened unless I desisted to write against France; where the name of His Majesty was never mentioned unaccompanied with some epithet too foul and calumnious to repeat; in that city I lived to see a public celebration of Lord Nelson's victory over the French, and to be serenaded with the tune of "God Save the King!" What a change! Certainly not to be entirely ascribed to me. But it was a change which I had a considerable share in producing. I stayed the mischief; I prevented that which would have prevented us from profiting from the events which time was hastening along. My American friends gave me all the credit of this change: I claim no such thing; but I know that I deserve, and that I shall have, the lasting gratitude of both countries. . . . The time of my writing will be looked back to as a memorable epoch, not only in politics, but in the political mind of America. I untied the tongue of British attachment: by an extraordinary exertion I broke the shackles in which the public mind had been held from the commencement of the revolutionary war, and once more opened a way for the workings of truth and of nature. . . . I lived to see, in that same city of Philadelphia, a public celebration of the feats of England over those of France, and to hear George the Third a favorite toast; a change which my friends, certainly too partial, ascribed wholly to my exertions, but to which those exertions did assuredly greatly contribute."[1]

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1. Political Register. Sept. 29, 1804.

The particular controversy then raging centered around the acceptance of the treaty which Jay had brought with him from England. The Democrats demanded the defeat of the proposed treaty and the negotiation of a new treaty with France. The Federalists, dominated by the commercial classes, hating the doctrines of French Revolution were stubbornly set on the adoption of Jay's Treaty which was advantageous for the mercantile and shipping interests.

Cobbett entered the controversy with pamphlets designed first to show the folly and wickedness of an alliance with France, and the advantages of an alliance with Great Britain. His views of France are still as lurid and highly colored as in the Observations, but he has attained a better grasp of the American political situation. Evidently he had now taken to reading the newspapers.

The first of the pamphlets, A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats, was published in January 1795. It was written in answer to a pamphlet by James Thompson Callendar entitled: The Political Progress of Great Britain, or an Impartial History of the Abuses in the Government of the British Empire in Europe, Asia, and America, from the Revolution in 1688, to the Present Time: the whole tending to prove the ruinous system of Taxation, War and Conquest. A piece of work of this sort was well calculated to rouse Cobbett to a fierce reply. Cobbett's an-

swer went through four or five editions; the date of their publication is often difficult to determine since the publishers sometimes neglected to put the date on the pamphlet. The Bone to Gnaw is in two parts, the second of which appeared after his A Kick for a Bite which was a retaliation to certain answers to the Bone to Gnaw.

The later editions carry the following preface typical of Cobbett:

> Reader,
>
> If you have a Shop to mind, or any other business to do, I advise you to go and do it, and let this book alone; for, I canassure you, it contains nothing of half so much importance to you, as the sale of a skein of thread of a yard of tape. By such a transaction you might possibly make a net profit of half a farthing, a thing, though seemingly of small value, much more worthy your attention than the treasures under the State House at Amsterdam, or all the mines of Peru. Half a farthing might lay the foundation of a brilliant fortune, and sooner you should be deprived of it by this work, though it may be called my offspring, I would, like the worshippers of Muloch, commit it to the flames with my own hands.
>
> If you are of that sex, vulgarly called the Fair, but which ought always to be called the Divine, let me beseech you, if you value your charms, to proceed no further. Politics is a mixture of anger and deceit, and these are the immortal enemies of Beauty. The instant a lady turns politician farewell the smiles, the dimples, the roses; the graces abandon her, and age sets his seal on her front. We never find Hebe, goddess ever fair and ever young, chattering politics at the tables of the gods; and though Venus once interposed in behalf of her beloved Paris, the spear of Diomede taught her "to tremble at the name of arms." And, have we not a terrible example of recent, very recent, date? I mean that of the unfortunate Mary Wolstoncraft. It is a well known fact, that, when that political lady began The Rights of Women, she had as fine black hair as you would wish to see, and that, before the second sheet of her work went to the press, it was turned as white, and a great deal whiter than her skin. You must needs think, I have

> the ambition common to every author; that is to say, to be read; but I declare, that, sooner than bleach one auburn ringlet, or even a single hair; sonner than rob the world of one heavenly smile, I would with pleasure see my pamphlet torn up to light the pipes of a Democratic club, or burnt, like the Political Progress, by the hands of a Scotch hangman, or even loaded with applauses by the Philadelphia Gazette.
>
> It is a little singular for an author to write a Preface to hinder his work from being read; but this is not my intention; all I wish to do, is, to confine it within its proper sphere. I am aware that my sincerity in this respect may be called in question, and that malice may ascribe to me motives that never entered my thoughts: but of this I am totally regardless; my work answers to its title, and consequently, nobody but the Democrats can have anything to do with it. Nor does it court their approbation; I throw it in amongst them, as amongst a kennel of hounds: let them snarl and growl over it, and gnaw it, and slaver it; the more they wear out their fangs this way the less dangerous will be their bite hereafter.

Cobbett occasionally made use of verse to blast his enemies. Two such poems appear in the prefaces to various editions of the second part of the Bone to Gnaw. One of these is called "A Song, to be sung by the Democrats at their future nocturnal meetings," and appears in an undated edition. It follows:

> Come, good fellows all -- Confusions the toast,
> And success to our excellent cause;
> As we've nothing to lose, lo, nought can be lost;
> So perdition to Federal laws!
>
> France shews us the way -- an example how great!
> Then, like France, let us stir up a riot;
> May our names be preserved by some damnable feat,
> For what but a wretch would lie quiet?
>
> As we are all poor rogues, 'tis most certainly right
> At the doors of the rich ones to thunder;
> Like the thieves who set fire to a dwelling at night,
> And come in for a share of the plunder.
>
> Whoever for mischief invents the best plan,
> Best murders, sets fires, and knocks down,
> The thanks of our Club shall be giv'n to that Man
> And hemlock shall form him a crown.

Our empire has tow'r'd with a lustre too long;
Then blot out this wonderful Sun;
Let us arm then at once, and in confidence strong
Complete what blak C****s has begun.

But grant a defeat--we are hang'd, and that's all,
A punishment light as a feather;
Yet we triumph in death, as we Catalines fall,
And go to the devil together.

Another piece of verse appeared in an edition dated May 28, 1795, and is undersigned "Peter Porcupine."

Once more the snarling democratic crew
(To discontent and mischief ever prone)
Show us their fangs, and gums of crimson hue:
Once more, to stop their mouths, I hurl
a bone.

All editions carry the name of Thomas Bradford as printer and publisher.

The title page of Part II outlines the program of the pamphlet:

1st. Observations on a Patriotic Pamphlet entitled "Proceedings of the United Irishmen."
2dly. Democratic Principles Exemplified by Example.
3rdly Democratic Memoires: or an Account of Some Recent Feats Performed by the Frenchified Citizens of the United States of America.

The pamphlet is a further blast against the French Revolution. The first part details the massacres at Lyons, and ends the details with this invocation:

> . . . And is there, can there be a faction in America so cruel, so bloody-minded, as to wish to see these scenes repeated in their own country, or any other? If there be, Great God! do thou mete to them, ten-fold, the measure they would mete to others; inflict on them every curse of which human nature is susceptible; hurl on them thy reddest thunder-bolts; sweep the sanguinary race from the face of creation.

After thus preparing the mind of the reader the

pamphlet deals with An Account of Some Recent Feats Performed by The Frenchified Citizens Of the United States of America. Having detailed the horrors of the Reign of Terror he asks: "If such then, are the principles of these men called Democrats, ought not every good man in this country to be very cautious how he gives them the least countenance?" Having overlooked all that was good in the Revolution and indentified its principles solely with those of murder and massacre, he now ascribes these principles to the Democrats, for were they not supporters of the principles of the Revolution.

> Upon a view of the horrible revolution that at present agitates the world, we perceive that though the grand object of the democrats has been everywhere the same, yet their pretended [sic] motives have varied with their situation.

The celebrations in America of French victories aroused Cobbett to special wrath.

> In these toasting times it would have been something wonderful if the sans culottes in America had neglected to celebrate the taking of Amsterdam by their brethren in France. I believe from my soul there have been more cannons fired here in the celebration of this conquest, than the French fired in achieving it. I think I have counted twenty-two grand civic festivals, fifty-one of an inferior order, and one hundred and ninety-three public dinners; at all which, I imagine, there might be nearly thirty-thousand people; and as twenty-thousand of them, or thereabouts, must have been married men, it is reasonable [sic] to suppose that eighteen or nineteen thousand women with their children were at home wanting bread, while their husbands were getting drunk at a civic feast.

The invitation to adopt the new metric system was especially abhorrent to Cobbett to whom the proposal

to abandon the English system seemed sacrilegious.

> . . . If we had set about making the alterations, which we were invited to make, we should, undoubtedly, have been invited to divide our year according to the decadery calendar, abolish Christianity, and punish with death those who should have dared to worship "the ci-devant God."

He accuses the Democrats of wishing to plunge their country into a war with Great Britain. This attitude is made evident, he claims, by their outcry against the Jay Treaty even before they know its terms.

> . . . "What!" say they, "make a treaty with Great Britain!" -- And why not, wiseacres? Who would you make a treaty with, but those with whom you trade? You are afraid of giving umbrage to France, eh? Is this language worthy an independent nation? What is France to us, that our destiny is to be linked to hers? that we are not to thrive because she is a bankrupt? She has no articles of utility to sell us, nor will she have wherewith to pay us for what she buys. Great Britain, on the contrary is a ready money customer; what she furnishes us is, in general, of the first necessity, for which she gives us, besides, a long credit; hundreds and thousands of fortunes are made in this country upon the bare credit given by the merchants of Great Britain.

Cobbett was a very effective propagandist. He understood the universal and special appeal that the prospect of business makes to a commercial people.

Between the publication of Part I and Part II of <u>A Bone to Gnaw</u> Cobbett had written another pamphlet called <u>A Kick for a Bite</u>. This pamphlet is especially notable for on its title page the authorship is attributed to "Peter Porcupine" a pseudonym which Cobbett used subsequently for all his work in America. A reviewer had likened him to a porcupine; nothing could have pleased Cobbett better, for a porcupine was just

what he meant to be in the hostile environment of Philadelphia.

In his Bone to Gnaw, Cobbett had sought to deter the people of America from seeking an alliance with France. In A Little Plain English, Addressed to the People of the United States, on the Treaty, and on the Conduct of the President relative thereto, in answer to "the Letters of Franklin" it was his object to reconcile them to the Treaty of Amity and Commerce with England. The pamphlet is an answer to one supposed to be written by Dallas, Secretary of the State of Pennsylvania, but published under the assumed name of "Franklin" which attacked the Treaty severely. Cobbett's answer forms one of the most able pamphlets he ever wrote. He relied less on the use of personalities, invectives, and wild reasoning. Instead, he made a point by point answer to "Franklin's" objections to the treaty; however, much of the Cobbett flavor still remains as the following selection shows:

> Franklin asserts, that to form a commercial treaty with Great Britain is a step, at once unnecessary, impolitic, dangerous and dishonourable.
>
> It is unnecessary, because "commercial treaties are an artificial means to obtain a natural end. They are the swathing bands of commerce, that impede the free operations of nature." This will not detain us long; it is one of those chimerical notions that so well characterize the Parisian school. Nobody but a set of philosophical politicians ever imagined the plan of opening all the ports in the world to all the vessels in the world, "of interweaving and confounding the interests of all nations, of forming the inhabitants of the

> earth into one vast republic, of rendering the whole family of mankind enlightened, free and happy". When this plan shall be put into execution with success, I will allow that commercial treaties are unnecessary, but until then, I must contend for the contrary.

He does not lose the opportunity to take a fling at the French. Here he resumes some of his customary use of vigorous terms and epithets.

> But, are you governed by an assembly of ignorant caballing legislators? An assembly of Nero, whose pastime is murder, who have defied the God of Heaven, and, in idea, have snatched the thunder from his hand to hurl it on a crouching people? And do you resemble the republican French? Have you case off the very semblance of virtue and religion? Do you indeed resemble those men of blood, those profligate infidels, who, uniting the frivolity of the monkey to the ferocity of the tiger, can go dancing to the gallows, or butchering their relations to the air of ah! ca ira?

Cobbett makes out a very able argument in favor of the treaty answering all the objections that had been raised. He also came to the defense of Washington in regard to the Constitutionality of the prodedure in the forming of Treaty and of Washington's appointment of Chief Justice Jay to negotiate the Treaty. "Franklin" had charged that the Chief Justice could not be sent out of the Country since he was necessary at any impeachment trial of the President, and by this means a corrupt President could thwart the impeachment. To this Cobbett answered:

> . . But waiving the insolence and most patriotic ungratitude of this insinuation; admitting your President to be what Franklin would make you believe he is, and that the necessity of impeaching him was a thing to be expected, I cannot perceive

> any great inconvenience that could arise from the absence of the Chief Justice. The President could not be impeached before the opening of Congress, and by that time it was reasonable to suppose, that the object of the extraordinary mission would be accomplished, and the Envoy ready to return. An impeachment against the President could hardly be hurried on in such a manner as not to leave an interval of four months between his accusation and trial, a space quite sufficient for recalling the Chief Justice.

It should be remembered that at this time the relations between President and Senate in regard to the procedures of treaty-making were not yet clear. What "advice and consent" meant precisely were not known. "Franklin" had advised that the President ought to be impeached because of his secret conduct of the Treaty and because he had evaded a new treaty with France while he courted one with Great Britain. Cobbett's stand held that the necessity for discretion and prudent secrecy gave the negotiation of treaties wholly into the hands of the President, and gave him also the right to determine his own foreign policy subject only to confirmation by the Senate.

This pamphlet shows a considerable advance on his previous productions in the treatment of political questions. In London the pamphlet was immediately reprinted and was looked on as a powerful presentation of the British case.

Before the year was over Cobbett had again used his pen in defence of the Federalists. The occasion

was the interception of a despatch of the French envoy, M. Fauchet, to Edmund Randolph, Secretary of State. Randolph was ardently in sympathy with France and as ardently opposed to the British treaty; and certain statements in Fauchet's despatch were taken to mean that Randolph was in French pay. This charge is now generally regarded as baseless, but Randolph's conduct had certainly been imprudent and he was compelled to resign.[1] In defense of his conduct, he had published a pamphlet A Vindication of Mr. Randolph's Resignation (Philadelphia, 1795).

This pamphlet formed the text for Cobbett's reply which was entitled A New Year's Gift to the Democrats; or Observations on a Pamphlet entitled 'A Vindication of Mr. Randolph's Resignation' and which appeared on January 1, 1796. Cobbett took the blackest view of Randolph's conduct picturing him as a greedy hireling in French pay. He pointed out the weak points of Randolph's arguments and thus aided the Federalists. The pamphlet is a very able one, making very little use of invective, epithets, or abuse. Cobbett attempts rather to make out his case by an examination and interpretation of the phrases of Fauchet's intercepted letter.

The staid tone of the matter was irksome to Cobbett, and at once point he became a little more Porcupine-like, after which he remarked that: "It is a great pity we

1. Carlyle. p. 57.

are obliged to quit this delightful theme, to return to the dry mercenary adventures of Mr. Randolph."

Peter Porcupine had just indulged in following verses made up in part of phrases from the intercepted letter:

> To the side of a stream, in a deep lonely dell
> Father Joseph[1] retired, as a hermit to dwell,
> His hermitage, crowned with a cap tricolor,[2]
> Brought a beggarly pilgrim his aid to implore.
> First the holy-man promis'd, and, for his professions,
> The penitent made him most precious confessions.
> Now tell me, dear son, said the hermit, your needs:--
> Give me, good Father Joseph, a string of gold beads. --
> A string of gold beads, says the hermit, Parbleu!
> Your request, my dear son, appears dev'lish new,
> He told him, in short, he was dammably poor;
> Kick'd him out of his den, and slam'd to the door.

The pamphlet ends with a eulogy of Washington:

> Thus has the Vindicator failed in all his attempts. On the article of corruption, of which we before doubted, we now doubt no longer; and as to his indirect accusation against the President,[3] it only serves to show that one who, with unblushing front, can ask a bribe, will never be ashamed to publish his ingratitude and apostacy.
>
> I will not, like him, conclude by calling on the people to judge between him and the President of the United States. Their respect for the latter would not, I trust, for a moment endure the competition; for, in spite of all the desperate efforts of a disappointed faction, their confidence in GENERAL WASHINGTON is, and will remain, unshaken. His name will be handed down to their children's children, and ever accompanied with gratitude, love, and admiration. It will be the ornament of the historian's page, will that of Randolph, should it be so unfortunate as not to sink into oblivion, will be thrown into some dark corner, among the "changeable men" and "pretended patriots of America."

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1. Joseph Fauchet, French Ambassador.
2. Fauchet's town and country homes were decorated with the tricolor.
3. An inspired newspaper article had claimed that Randolph was being sacrificed because he had advised against Washington's signing the Jay Treaty.

CHAPTER V

COBBETT'S INDEPENDENCE

For Cobbett, 1796 was to be an even more productive year than 1795 had been. "These were the great days of the political pamphlet -- squibs, lampoons, mere scurrility, party controversialists at it hammer and tongs, serious philosophical argument making its topical appeal. Cobbett's incursion into politics, and the instantaneous success of his vigorous writings, called a host of pamphleteers into the field."[1] Cobbett was kept busy answering his enemies and hurling forth new thunders.

In January, his connection with his bookseller, Thomas Bradford, was broken amidst a violent quarrel. Bradford had taken advantage of Cobbett in financial matters and though his early pamphlets went through edition after edition, each finding a ready sale, Cobbett got little from them. Up to and including A New Year's Gift for the Democrats and the first number of the new periodical The Prospect from the Congress Gallery (of which we shall speak below), Cobbett had received in all four hundred and three dollars and twenty-one cents.[2] The inadequacy of this sum was shown when Cobbett's offer to buy back the copyrights of the pamphlets for the sum he had received for them was rejected by Bradford. The

1. Cole p. 60
2. Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine. pp. 48-49.

dispute that finally arose was not over financial matters, however, but over Bradford's attitude toward Cobbett. Bradford made him a much better offer for his work but Cobbett's easily offended sensibilities had been offended.

The quarrel arose over The Prospect from the Congress Gallery. Cobbett wanted to publish it at the end of the session in one volume; Bradford thought serially would be better. Cobbett would not give his approbation to this or to the subscription that was opened for the support of the work. Cobbett's account of the cause of the quarrel is as follows:

> The first Number, as it was called (but not by me) was published; and its success led Mr. Bradford to press for a continuation. His son offered me, I believe, a hundred dollars a Number, in place of eighteen; and I should have accepted his offer, had it not been for a word that escaped him during the conversation. He observed that their customers would be much disappointed, for that his father had promised a continuation, and that it should be made very interesting. This slip of the tongue opened my eyes at once. What! a bookseller undertake to promise that I should write and that I should please his customers too! No; if all his customers, if all the Congress, with the President at their head, had come and solicited me; nay, had my salvation depended on a compliance, I would not have written another line.[1]

In the squabble that followed neither party took a very elevated stand. Bradford claimed that Cobbett was merely a needy hireling whom he had saved from the gutter and clothed and fed. Cobbett answered these statements with great earnestness, and made a violent personal attack on Bradford and his son, Samuel F. Bradford. He accused the father of longing after aristo-

1. Ibid. pp. 41-42.

cratic connections, unworthy in a republican. The son was treated to pure Billingsgate which is scarcely printable.[1]

The break with the Bradfords made necessary that Cobbett seek a new publisher. He had already determined to open his own shop, but for a month or two he published through another publisher, Davies. Through the latter he issued Numbers Two, Three, and Four of The Prospect from the Congress Gallery, now called the Political Censor. Cobbett had evidently realized that Bradford was right in his contention that a periodical publication would be more satisfactory, especially in a financial sense. Thus it seems evident that Cobbett had quarreled solely over what he considered the insult offered to him by the Bradfords daring to dispose of his services without consulting him.

Cobbett had some of the attributes of a modern press-agent. Publicity and opposition were as the breath of life to his nostrils. Into his plan for opening his shop he put all his talent for combining publicity and provocation. "Philadelphia, as we have seen, was strongly Democratic, overwhelmingly anti-British, keenly pro-French. Cobbett set out deliberately to flout all its most cherished views, to dare the mob to commit acts of violence against him, to carry his point by sheer audacity. Hitherto, while his works had become

1. Carlyle, pp. 58-59; Cole, p. 62. For other details see the Life and Adventures, and many passages scattered through Porcupine's Works.

famous, he had been comparatively little known as their author."[1]

He took a large house in Second Street, in the busiest part of Philadelphia and fixed it up as a shop. He was advised to display nothing in the window that might provoke the people of Philadelphia; but this was just what Cobbett intended to do. The forebodings of his friends only added to Cobbett's enjoyment. For the opening during the second week of July he prepared a display calculated to annoy as many people as possible. Into the window he crowded in all the portraits he had in his possession of "kings, queens, princes, nobles, and bishops, and, in short, with every portrait, picture, or book that I could obtain, and that I thought like to excite rage in the inveterate enemies of Great Britain, particularly a large, coarse sixpenny representation of Lord Howe's victory over the French."[2] He had intended to put in as a representation of the battle scene a small picture which was a leaf from the European Magazine. But he was offered a larger copy, four feet by two, and he put this in instead. "The letters were large; the mob, ten or twenty deep, could read, and they did read aloud, too, LORD HOWE'S DECISIVE VICTORY OVER THE FRENCH."[3]

A huge mob gathered, threats of violence were plentiful, but the very audacity of the display quieted the crowd. The stroke was perfect; the news of his defiance

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1. Cole. p. 62.
2. Political Register. Oct. 3, 1805.
3. Ibid.

rang through the United States. Cobbett's shop had made him famous. No bookseller ever started in business better advertised. Cobbett's landlord, the rich Quaker, John Aldden, was urged to evict his unpopular tenant and was threatened in anonymous letters with the destruction of his property if he allowed Cobbett to remain. The reply of this staunch soul was an offer to make Cobbett a present of the house; Cobbett refused, however, on the ground that he could not rob Aldden's children.[1] In a pamphlet, The Scare-Crow, Cobbett made a vicious attack upon those who had threatened him, reaffirmed all he had said and done, and defied them to do their worst.

Even before Cobbett had opened his shop his power and influence were known to those high in political councils. At this time M. Talleyrand was in the United States, ostensibly in exile, but according to Cobbett and others, acting as an unofficial French agent. Talleyrand was doing business as a flour merchant, but was even more at his own trade of political intrigue. From Cobbett's subsequent accounts it appears that Talleyrand requested a meeting with him, and that when, at length a meeting was arranged, Talleyrand attempted to buy Cobbett off by paying him twenty dollars a month for English lessons instead of the customary six. While Cobbett's account is the only evidence we have concerning the meeting, the attempt appears typical of Talley-

1. Cole. p. 63.

rand's methods.

> Some months after his arrival in this city [Talleyrand] left a message with a friend of his, requesting me to meet him at that friend's house. Several days passed away before that meeting took place: I had no business to call me that way, and I therefore did not go. At last this modern Judas and I got seated before the same fireside. I expected that he wanted to expostulate with me on the severe treatment he had met with at my hands: I had called him an apostate, a hypocrite, and every other name of which he was deserving: I there-leave the reader to imagine my astonishment when I heard him begin with complimenting me on my wit and learning. He praised several of my pamphlets, the New Year's Gift in particular, and still spoke of them as mine. I did not acknowledge myself the author, of course, but yet he would insist that I was; or, at any rate, they reflected, he said, infinite honour on the author, let him be who he might. Having carried this species of flattery so far as he judged it safe, he asked me, with a vast deal of apparent seriousness, whether I had received my education at Oxford or at Cambridge! Hitherto I had kept my countenance pretty well; but this abominable stretch of hypocrisy, and the placid mien and slow accents with which it was pronounced, would have forced a laugh from a Quaker in the midst of a meeting. I don't recollect what reply I made to him; but this I recollect well: I gave him to understand I was no trout, and consequently was not to be caught by tickling.
>
> This information led him to something more solid. He began to talk about business. I was no flour merchant, but I taught English; and as luck would have it, this was the very commodity that Bishop Perigord wanted. If I had taught Thornton's[1] or Webster's language, or sold sand or ashes, or pepper-pot, it would have been just the same to him. He knew the English language as well as I did; but he wanted to have dealings with me in some way or other.
>
> I knew, that notwithstanding his being proscribed at Paris, he was extremely intimate with Adet, and this circumstance led me to suspect his real business in the United States: I therefore did not care to take him as a scholar. I told him, that being engaged in a translation for the press, I could not possibly quit home. This difficulty the lame fiend hopped over in a moment. He would very gladly come to my house. I cannot say but it would have been a great satisfaction to me to have seen the ci-devant Bishop of Autun, the guardian of the

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1. William Thorton, a phonetic reformer.

> holy oil that anointed the heads of the descendants of St. Louis, come trudging through the dirt to receive a lesson from me; but on the other hand I did not want a French spy to take a survey of either my desk or my house. My price for teaching was six dollars a month; he offered me twenty; but I refused; and before I left him I gave him clearly to understand that I was not to be purchased.[1]

In February 1796 Cobbett brought out The Bloody Buoy thrown out as a warning to the Political Pilots of America. This pamphlet consisted of a collection of atrocities committed by the French revolutionaries. It was a sensational record of horrors selected from various French authors, and had considerable vogue. It was reprinted in London the next year and in 1798 and ran through seven editions.

On July 22, 1796 appeared The Scare Crow. It is, as we have already seen, an answer to the threats against himself. In it he remarked:

> When William Penn was tracing out his beloved city of Philadelphia, if any had told him that the time would come, when a man should be threatened with murder for offering to sale in one of the streets, a print "indicative of British prowess," I much question if the good man, though a Quaker, would not have said that it was a d--ned lie. Poor old fellow! he little dreamed what was to happen at the close of the "enlightened eighteenth century.[2]

He had been accused of displaying "courtly" pictures and "prints indicative of the prowess of our enemies the British, and the disgrace of the French." Cobbett replied:

> But what does the cut-throat mean by "courtly prints?" I have Ankerstrom the regicide; that can be no courtly print at any rate. I have, indeed,

1. Porcupine's Gazette, May 6, 1797. (In Porcupine's Works, V, pp. 360-363.
2. Ibid. IV, p. 12.

the portraits of the late king and queen of France; but as they are dead, one would imagine that they could create no alarm. Poor Louis little thought when he sent hither those portraits of himself and his queen, which now hang up in the Congress-House, that the day would come, when a bookseller would be threatened with murder for exhibiting his likeness, in the capital of the Union. Others have exhibited him at their windows, stretched on the scaffold; they had a right so to do; every man to his taste, and I to mine. -- 'Tis true, I have the portraits of Mr. Pitt and Lord Grenville, and several other noble personages; but then, I have Marat and Lepelletier, by way of rubbing off as I go. I have a Right Reverend Father in God in one corner of my window, and if I could procure the right irreverend Father in the Devil, Tom Paine, I would hoist him up in the other; for want of him I have Doctor Priestley, who, upon a shift, is very capable of supplying his place.

I have some groups, too, executed by order of the French Convention, which, I humbly presume, will not be called "courtly." The taking the Bastile decorates one pane of my window, as it did the Birmingham club-room; the French people on their marrow-bones acknowledging the existence of a God, by order of Robespierre, decorates another; and a third is ornamented with a representation of the glorious "victory" obtained over the Swiss Guards, on the 10th of August, 1792. I am promised a print of Poor Richard, in the arms of a brace of angels, who are carrying him off, God knows whither.

I am sure, now, all these things are republican enough; and if my sovereign lords will but please to take my whole collection into view, I cannot think that they will find me so criminal as I have been represented.[1]

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1. Life and Adventures, etc., Cole's ed. pp. 80-81.

CHAPTER VI

AUTOBIOGRAPHY AND JOURNALISM

With the revelation of Cobbett as "Peter Porcupine" he became the most abused man in the United States. Franklin Bache's Aurora became the principle vehicle for attacks upon Cobbett. Anecdotes, innuendoes and pretended communications held him up to ridicule. For some time he was charged with being in British pay, and finally he was forced to take notice of the charge, for there appeared in the Aurora an abusive, scurrilous, paragraph signed "Paul Hedgehog" presuming to identify the messenger who was carrying the English gold to Cobbett. The communication stated that Cobbett had been "obliged to abscond from his darling old England" where his usual occupation had been that of "garret-scribbler;" and that in America being "without hardly bread to eat, and not a second shirt to his back, he resumed his old occupation of scribbling, having little chance of success in the other employments which drove him to this country."[1] His sudden change of condition shows that English money had been liberally employed, "for his zeal to make atonement to his mother country seems proportioned to the magnitude of his offence, and the guineas advanced."[2]

1. Smith, Edward. William Cobbett. London 1878. 2 vols. I, 166.
2. Ibid. p. 167.

Cobbett had been preparing for some time to publish the history of his life when a fair opportunity presented itself. Consequently on August 9 there appeared in the Gazette of the United States the first announcement of The Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine, With a Full and Fair Account of All His Authoring Transactions; being a sure and infallible guide for all enterprising young men who wish to make a fortune by Writing Pamphlets.[1] On the title page appears a quotation from Shakespeare: "Now, you lying varlets, you shall see how a plain tale will put you down." The reader is already acquainted in some degree with the contents of the pamphlet for it is one of the important sources of information regarding Cobbett's early life, and it has been made considerable use of throughout this paper.

To answer the charges that he had been whipped out of the British army, Cobbett cited the documents of his honorable discharge. He then speaks of his sojourn in France. In this pamphlet he says nothing concerning the reasons for his leaving the army and for his flight from England.

He then speaks of his arrival in America, the letter from Jefferson, and his entry into pamphleteering. He gives an account of his relations with Bradford showing that his share of the profits from the publication of The Observations on Priestley's Emigra-

1. Ibid. I, p. 167.

tion amounted to twenty-one cents. Concerning the charge that he is in the pay of Great Britain he says:

> When a foreign government hires a writer, it takes care that his labours shall be distributed, whether the readers are all willing to pay for them or not. This we daily see verified in the distribution of certain blasphemous gazettes, which, though kicked from the door with disdain, flies in at the window. Now, has this ever been the case with the works of Peter Porcupine? Were they ever thrusted upon people in spite of their remonstrances? Can Mr. Bradford say, that thousands of these pamphlets have ever been paid for by any agent of Great Britain? Can he say, that I have ever distributed any of them? No; he can say no such thing. They had, at first, to encounter every difficulty, and they have made their way, supported by public approbation, and by that alone. Mr. Bradford, if he is candid enough to repeat what he told me, will say, that the British Consul, when he purchased half a dozen of them, insisted upon having them at the wholesale price! Did this look like a desire to encourage them? Besides, those who know anything of Mr. Bradford, will never believe that he would have lent his aid to a British Agent's publications; for, of all the Americans I have yet conversed with, he seems to entertain the greatest degree of rancour against that nation.
>
> I have every reason to believe, that the British Consul was far from approving of some , at least, of my publications. I happened to be in a bookseller's shop, unseen by him, when he had the goodness to say, that I was a "wild fellow." On which I shall only observe, that when the King bestows on me about five hundred pounds sterling a-year, perhaps, I may become a tame fellow, and hear my master, my countrymen, my friends, and my parents, belied and execrated, without saying one single word in their defence.[1]

Cobbett was very bitter towards Benjamin Franklin. Especially did he condemn him for his lack of religion; Cobbett himself was and remained a staunch adherent of the faith of the Established Church. In the Life and Adventures he takes a fling at Franklin:

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1. p. 54-55.

> How much better is it, thus to tell the naked truth, than to descent to such miserable shifts as Doctor Franklin has had recourse to, in order to persuade people that his forefathers were men of wealth and consideration. Not being able to refer his reader to the herald's office for proofs of the fame and antiquity of his family, he appeals to the etymology of his name, and points out a passage in an obsolete book, whence he has the conscience to insist on our concluding, that, in the Old English language, a Franklin meant a man of good reputation and of consequence. According to Dr. Johnson, a Franklin was what we now call a gentleman's steward or land-bailiff, a personage one degree above a bumbailiff, and that's all.
>
> Every one will, I hope, have the goodness to believe, that my grandfather was no philosopher. Indeed he was not. He never made a lightning-rod, nor bottled up a single quart of sun-shine, in the whole course of his life. He was no almanack-maker, nor quack, nor chimney-doctor, nor soapboiler, not ambassador, nor printer's devil: neither was he a deist, and all his children were born in wedlock. The legacies he left, were, his scythe, his reap-hook, and his flail; he bequeathed no old and irrecoverable debts to an hospital: he never cheated the poor during his life, nor mocked them in his death. He has, it is true, been suffered to sleep quietly beneath the green sord; but, if his descendants cannot point to his statue over the door of a library, they have not the mortification to hear him daily accused of having been a whore-master, a hypocrite, and an infidel.[1]

The appearance of The Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine was a signal for a veritable outburst of attacks upon Cobbett. Many of these appeared in the Aurora, and others appeared as pamphlets. The Aurora went to outrageous lengths such as the insertion of a pretended communication from Cobbett in which he invited the public to come and view his back in order to prove that he had never suffered from the lash. Although Cobbett inserted

1. Ibid. pp. 18-19.

a denial of this in the Gazette of the United States, Bache kept up the hoax and informed his readers that while some were satisfied by a sight of Peter Porcupine's back others detected very faint scars and still others believed that Peter must have removed the scars by a chemical preparation.

Bradford published pamphlets under the pseudonym of "Timothy Tickletoby." The first was The Impostor Detected, or a Review of Some of the Writings of Peter Porcupine. "Peter Grievous" (Joseph Hopkinson?) wrote a poem against Cobbett hailing him as the "mighty champion of the clan, Who war against the Rights of Man." To this was added The Vision, a Dialogue between Marat and Peter Porcupine in the Infernal Regions. The most famous of the anti-Cobbett pamphlets is probably A Pill for Porcupine: being a Specific for an Obstinate Itching which that Hireling has long contracted for Lying and Calumny. Containing A Vindication of the American, French, and Irish Characters Against His Scurrilities. Its author is described as a "Friend to Political Equality;" it appeared on September 1, 1796.

The most amusing of the pamphlets is one burlesquing The Life and Adventures. It is called The Last Confession and Dying Speech of Peter Porcupine, with an Account of His Dissection. It imitates exactly the style of Cobbett's autobiographical work and follows it closely, merely changing the meaning by a slight re-arrangement of words. The account of the dissection after the supposed

hanging of Peter Porcupine is typical of the humor of that day but parts of it hardly stand repetition.

William Carey wrote The Porcupiniad: a Hudibrastic Poem. Its humor is forced, and the poem is scarcely readable. In copious footnotes to it, Carey explained his allusions, and attacked Cobbett in no measured terms.

Most of the booksellers of Philadelphia at one time or another took a fling at Cobbett. Robert Campbell published one: British Honour and Humanity; or the Wonders of American Patience. It attacked Cobbett's anti-French attitude, and countered his attacks on Gallatin, Swanwick, and Paine.

Mathew Carey was especially suggestive and on the title page of A Plumb Pudding for the Humane, Chaste, Valiant, Enlightened Peter Porcupine appears a wood-cut of a porcupine hung to the cross-bar of a street post. Over it appear the lines:

> "His hand will be against every man -- and
> every man's hand against him." Gen. xvi. 12.
> If "Blessed are the peace-makers" --
> accursed be Porcupine, the apostle of blood
> "Hated by knaves, and knaves to hate,
> "Be this my motto -- this my fate."

Cobbett was about through with his American career of pamphleteering. He had begun on the Political Censor, successor to The Prospect from the Congress Gallery, and issued a number each month. Only occasionally did he interrupt these almost purely political commentaries with other pamphlets.

In November, however, appeared The Gros Mousqueton Diplomatique; or Diplomatic Blunderbuss. It is subtitled Containing Citizen Adet's Notes to the Secretary of State. As also his Cockade Proclamation. With a Preface by Peter Porcupine. In his preface Cobbett explains that a Blunderbuss is a "species of fire arms that exceeds all others, manageable by a single hand, in the noise of its discharge."

> But, the reader will not, I hope, have conceived me so devoid of all decency and prudence, as to imagine, even for a moment, that it is in this degrading sense that the name of Blunderbuss has been given to the invaluable collection which I here present to the public. Indeed it is so evident that I could mean no such thing, that this declaration seems hardly necessary; but, as my poor old grandmother used to say, "a burnt child dreads the fire," and after the unrelenting severities of misconception and misconstruction, that a humane and commiserating public have so often seen me endure, they will think it very natural for me to fear, that what I really intended as a compliment, would if left unexplained, be tortured into insult and abuse, if not into the horrid crime of leze republicanism, at the very idea of which my hair stands on end and my heart dies within me.
>
> "But," cry the Democrats, "in what sense then do you apply the word Blunderbuss? Come, come, Mr. Peter, none of your shuffling." --Silence, you yelping devils; go growl in your dark kennel; slink into your straw, and leave me to my reader: I'll warrant I explain myself to his satisfaction.

Having thus taken the reader into his confidence, Cobbett offers a collection of documents, mostly Adet's notes to the State Department which he hopes will convince the public of the danger and worthlessness of any dealings with the French Republic. There is no comment on them by Cobbett; he is content to let the bombastic French documents of this period stand alone.

In fact there was a tremendous revulsion of feeling

at this time, because of the "X.Y.Z. Affair" which was being heavily exploited by the Federalists. The continued seizure of American shipping by French war-vessels was also alienating much sympathy in America. The Federalist press began to gain on its opponents. Cobbett continued his warm championship of Washington, especially against the attacks of Thomas Paine. To Cobbett at this period Paine appeared as the very incarnation of the devil. When the American envoy rescued Paine from a French prison, Cobbett was wrathful, and felt compelled to relieve his feelings by publishing in the May, 1796 number of the Censor a funeral ode to Paine. It concludes:

> 'Tom Paine for the Devil is surely a match,
> In hanging Old England he cheated Jack Catch,
> In France (the first time such a thing had been seen)
> He cheated the watchful and sharp guillotine,
> And at last, to the sorrow of all the beholders
> He marched out of life with his head on his shoulders.'[1]

In August 1796, Paine published an attack upon Washington since he felt that the American government had deserted him. In a published letter he made a long and bitter attack on Washington's military career, as well as on his policy while President. Cobbett was thoroughly roused by this, and he devoted the September number of the Political Censor to a Life of Thomas Paine, interspersed with Remarks and Reflections. The "remarks" and "reflections" were exceedingly uncompli-

1. Porcupine's Works, III, p. 397.

mentary in character, but Cobbett still felt dissatisfied, and in December he published in the Censor a direct reply to Paine's letter to Washington, entitled a Letter to the Infamous Tom Paine.

Cobbett contrasted the abuse of Washington in Paine's letter with the eulogies of him in The Right of Man. After triumphantly printing in parallel columns the contradictory passages he proceeded to address Paine:

> 'Now atrocious, infamous miscreant, "look on this picture and on this." I would call on you to blush, but the rust of villainy has eaten your cheek to the bone, and dried up the source of suffusion. Are these the proofs of your disinterestedness and consistency? Is it thus that you are always the same, and that "you preserve through life the right-angled character of man"?'[1]

Cobbett himself might be accused of inconsistency for later when he became the champion of reform and radicalism in England Paine became to him a hero capable only of virtue.

Cobbett continued the Political Censor for eight numbers. Except for those devoted to attacks upon Thomas Paine, the various numbers of the Censor are devoted to the publication of important debates in the Senate and House of Representatives. Each account is followed by "Remarks" by Cobbett in which he sharply attacks the personalities and arguments of the Republicans.

On one occasion he says of Gallatin:

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1. Ibid; IV, p. 331.

> This gentleman tells us, that the House of Representatives "have a right, by withholding appropriations when they see proper, to stop the wheels of Government." . . . When Mr. Gallatin rose from his seat to broach this clogging principle, there was an old farmer sitting beside me, to whom the person of the orator seemed familiar: "ah, ah!" says he, "what's little Moses in Congress?" I sharply reprimanded him for taking one of our representatives for a Jew; but, to confess a truth, the Gentleman from Geneva has an accent not unlike that of a wandering Israelite. It is neither Italian, German, nor French; and were it not a sort of leze republicanism, I would say he clipped the King's English most unmercifully. Such an accent is admirably adapted for extolling the virtue of leaden buckles, or for augmenting the discordant howlings of a synaguogue; but it throws a certain air of ridicule over the debates of a legislative assembly, and forms a sort of burlesque on the harmonious eloquence of other members."[1]

Concerning the project of a suitable building to house the Government in Washington, he says:

> I thought, Sir, I heard the work Capitol mentioned during the debate. For the love of modesty, I hope the Congress-house is not to be called a Capitol! If this is to be the case, it will be necessary to go a step further, and assume the masquerade dress of the French Romans. How pretty we shall look in long white robes, descending to our toes, a blue girdle about our waists, a scarlet cloak on our shoulders, and a red liberty cap on our heads! Let them all be well embroidered with gold, as those of the French legislators are to be; and if they are even set with precious stones, it will be additional proof of our jealousy for the honour "of a great and free people." We shall, indeed, bring upon us a ridicule equal to that excited by the upstart pettifoggers of the National Assembly, when they insisted on the folding doors of the Louvre being thrown open at their approach: but let the world be merry; while we are swaggering about in our consular robes, we shall but little care whether we are called ambitious buffoons or not.[2]

1. Ibid, III, pp. 253-254. Political Censor, March, 1796.
2. Ibid, III, pp. 280-281.

As for the project of the removal of the Government to the banks of the Potomac he could see nothing but evil in it, fearing the influence of the unregenerate Democrats of Virginia. He cited the horrible example of the results of the removal of the French capital to Paris.

The third number of the Censor (April, 1796) was devoted almost entirely to the debates concerning the appropriations for putting the Jay Treaty into effect. Cobbett claimed that the opposition to it was inspired by France and was supported by those who did not wish English debts to be paid. On the whole his discussion is very able except, for instance, where he diverges to discuss the character, both physical and mental, of one Mr. Swanwick, a Representative from Pennsylvania, or the pretended dialogue between Gallatin and Lord Grenville in which the former is made to appear mean, ridiculous, and ignoble before the calm, majestic and serene Lord Grenville.

Cobbett emphasized the importance of the Treaty in averting war,[1] and asserted that the avoidance of war was very essential to the United States, since "this is not a warlike nation, not has this nation a warlike Government." Furthermore, "in a war with any nation whatever, this country can gain nothing, and in a war with Great Britain it has everything to lose."[2] From the last war, i.e., the Revolution, only independence

1. Cobbett proved a poor prophet.
2. Porcupine's Works. III p. 359.

was gained, "if independence was a gain (for at present that is very problematical." And war, he was certain, would result in the Constitution being "thrown aside as useless lumber," whereupon "a revolutionary state must succeed," which would put us in the same deplorable state as the revolutionists had put France into.[1]

The May Censor is devoted wholly to the satirization of Swanwick, and attacks against Thomas Paine, and especially against France and French influence in the United States. The next Censor (No. V) appeared in September, and, as we have seen, was devoted entirely to a life of Paine. Censor No. VI for November was devoted to disproval of the charges against the Administration that its proclamation of neutrality was in reality a policy of aiding the enemies of France. He takes up each charge as to the Government's anti-French policy and attempts to show that this policy was in conformity with its international duties. Its acquiescence in certain British policies he also defends on the same grounds.

Cobbett never would consent to becoming a citizen of the United States, a fact which lost him much support and sympathy and considerably weakened his influence. In discussing the impressment of American seamen, he made his apologia on the subject of his stand on citizenship.

> It is an established and universally acknowledged principle, that, to the lawful sovereign

1. Ibid. III, p. 364.

> power of the state, or, in other words to the state itself, in which a man is born, he owed allegiance to the day of his death, unless exempted therefrom by the consent of that sovereign power. This principle is laid down by nature herself, and is supported by justice and general policy. A man, who is not dead to every sentiment that distinguishes him from the brute, feels himself attached to his native land by ties very little weaker than those which bind him to his parents, and he who can deny the one, will make little scruple of denying the other. For the truth of the former remark, I appeal to the heart of my reader, and for the truth of the latter, to his daily observation. -- Who would not regard as a monster, the ungrateful wretch that should declare he was no longer the son of his father? And yet this is but one step from pretending to shake off his allegiance to his country. Such declarations may be made, but the debt of duty and allegiance remains undiminished.
>
> And is it not just that the state which has bred. nourished, and protected you, should have a title to your allegiance. . . . The obligation here is perfectly reciprocal; as the state cannot, by its own arbitrary will, withhold that protection which is the birthright of every individual subject, so no subject can, by his arbitrary will, alienate that allegiance which is the right of the state.
>
> The general policy too, the mutual interest of nations, in supporting this principle, is so evident, that nothing but the influence of the wild and barbarian doctrines of the regenerated French can account for its having been disputed. -- If men could alienate their allegiance at pleasure, they could also transfer it at pleasure; and then, into what confusion would not mankind be plunged? Where should we look for the distinctive mark of nations, and where find the standard of right and duty?[1]

His argument, as given and as further developed on the subject of impressment was the stock one of British thought and indeed of almost universal belief in that day everywhere except in the United States where necessity for securing new hands and fresh supplies of human energy to conquer the wilderness produced a new theory

1. Ibid. III, pp.234-235.

which was to become finally the accepted one of modern political thought and practice.

Congress met again in December, and the seventh or December number of the Censor was, therefore, devoted to domestic politics. Cobbett quotes Washington's address to Congress in full, and also the answers to the Message by the Senate and House. Its subject matter is as usual concerned with a defense of the pro-British policy of the Federalists. At one point he makes an interesting allusion to the fact that even in that day the fair sex looked to Paris for their bonnets and accessories:

> The commercial connection between this country and Great Britain is full as necessary as that between the baker and the miller, while the connections between America and France may be compared to one between the baker and the milliner or toyman. France may furnish us with looking-glasses; but without the aid of Britain we shall be ashamed to see ourselves in them, unless the sans-culottes can persuade us that threadbare beggary is a beauty. France may deck the heads of our wives and daughters (but by the bye, she shan't those of mine) with ribbons, gauze, and powder, their ears with bobs, their cheeks with paint, and their heels with gaudy-party-colored silk, as rotten as the hearts of the manufacturers; but Great Britain must cover their and our bodies. When the rain pours down and washes the rose from the cheek; when the bleak north-wester blows through the gauze, then it is that we know our friends. Great Britain must wrap us upward, and keep us all decent, snug and comfortable, from the child in swaddling clothes to its tottering grandsire. France may send us cockades, as she does (or has done) in abundance; but Great Britain must send us hats to stick them in. France may furnish the ruffle, but Great Britain must send us the shirt; and the commerce of the latter nation is just as much more necessary to this country than that of the former, as a good decent shirt is more necessary than a paltry dishclout of a ruffle.[1]

1. Ibid. III. pp. 310-311.

Cobbett continually harped on the dangers to the United States of a war with Great Britain. He presents graphic pictures of what would ahppen to our paltry navy and to our coast when the invincible might of Britain should be felt. Whether Cobbett succeeded in subduing the war fever of the Democratic Republicans of the South and West who felt that they had "licked" the British once and could do it again is highly problematic. Knowing the boastful spirit of the frontiersman it is more likely that it roused them to a desire to try odds with England again. The seaboard maritime interests were impressed, but they already knew where their interests lay, and did not need Cobbett to tell them. Cobbett probably did the British cause very little good, for he was doing for the British exactly what he was criticizing the Francophiles of doing for the French.

He ended this number of the Censor with the Letter to the Infamous Tom Paine with which we are already familiar. The eighth and last number appeared in January, 1797. It is devoted much like the previous ones to diatribes against the French, and attempts to prove that France and not Great Britain was really the enemy of the United States. As usual he cited all the incidents of French outrages, while just as industriously the anti-Federalists were citing the outrages of the British and ignoring those of the French.

CHAPTER VII

PORCUPINE'S GAZETTE AND DAILY ADVERTISER

But the publication of a monthly blast against his enemies was not enough now for Peter Porcupine's energies. And the Federalists felt that another newspaper was needed to combat the Aurora. Accordingly an announcement appeared in the Gazette of the United States on February 1, 1797, of a newspaper to be called Porcupine's Gazette and Daily Advertiser and to be published by William Cobbett.

> Proposals by William Cobbett, opposite Christ Church, Philadelphia, for publishing a newspaper, to be entitled,--
>
> "Porcupine's Gazette and Daily Advertiser."
>
> Methinks I hear the reader exclaim: "What! have we not gazettes enough already? Yes, and far too many; but those that we have are, in general, conducted in such a manner that their great number, instead of rendering mine unnecessary, is the only cause that calls for its establishment.
>
> The gazettes in this country have done it more real injury than all its enemies ever did, or can do. They mislead the people at home, and misrepresent them abroad. It was these vehicles of sedition and discord that encouraged the counties in the west to rebel; it was they that gave rise to the depredations of Britain, by exciting the people to such acts of violence against that nation as left no room to doubt that we were determined on war; and it was they, when an accommodation had been happily effect, that stirred up an opposition to it such as has seldom been witnessed, and which was overcome by mere chance. These gazettes it was that, by misrepresenting the dispositions of the people, encouraged the French to proceed from one degree of insolence to another, till at last their minister braves the President in his chair, and a bullying commander comes and tells us that his only business is to seize our vessels, in violation of a treaty, in virtue of which alone he claims a right to enter our ports: and it is these gazettes

that now have the impudence to defend what their falsehood and malice have produced.

I shall be told that the people are to blame; that they are not obliged to read these abominable publications. But they do read them; and thousands who read them read nothing else. To suppress them is impossible; they will vomit forth their poison; it is a privilege of their natures that no law can abridge, and therefore the only mode left is to counteract its effects.

This must be done, too, in their own way. Books, or periodical publications in the form of books, may be of some service, but are by no means a match for their flying folios. A falsehood that remains uncontradicted for a month begins to be looked upon as a truth, and when the detection at last makes its appearance, it is often as useless as that of the doctor who finds his patient expired. The only method of opposition, then, is to meet them on their own ground; to set foot to foot; dispute every inch and every hair's breadth; fight them at their own weapons, and return them two blows for one.

A gazette of this stamp is what I have long wished to see, but I have wished and expected it in vain. Indignation at the supineness of others has at last got the better of all diffidence in my own capacity, and has determined me to encounter the task. People have heard one side long enough; they shall now hear the other.[1]

In the issue for March 4, 1797, Cobbett gave a sketch of the manner in which he intended to conduct his publication:

Professions of impartiality I shall make none. They are always useless, and are besides perfect nonsense, when used by a news-monger . . . For my part, I feel the strongest partiality for the cause of order and good government, such as we live under, and against everything that is opposed to it. To profess impartiality here, would be as absurd as to profess it in a war between Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, Happiness and Misery. . . .

Communications will be thankfully received. I wish my paper to be a rallying point for the friends of Government. Here they may speak their minds without reserve. . . .

Besides the usual source of foreign intelligence, the public papers, it is my intention to give abstracts from all the good political pamphlets, published in London; from which a better idea of the real situation of affairs is generally to be gathered,

1. Smith. I. pp. 185-187.

than from the promiscuous miscellany of a newspaper. . . . One thing I will promise, however, and that is, to spare neither pains nor cost to come at the exact state of slaver, and its consequent misery, that the people of that once happy country [France] are now groaning under. . . .[1]

To Franklin Bache he at once threw his defiance:

Sir, your vehicle of lies and sedition, of Saturday last, contained the following paragraph:

"From a Correspondent.--Speech of Peter Porupine.

In a conversation a few days ago the British corporal declared, 'that he would never forgive the Americans for their rebellion against their king, and that he would never rest until they were reduced to their former obedience.' If the fellow, whose back still exhibits the marks of his former virtue, should dare to deny this, it can be substantiated by undoubted evidence. After this speech it may be well to repeat, that Peter Porcupine is considered the champion of the federalists!!!"

Now, pray, is this of your manufacture, or is it really from a correspondent? If you own it for yours, I assert that you are a liar, and an infamous scoundrel; if you do not, your correspondent has my free leave to take those appellations to himself.[2]

He accused Bache of being in the pay of France, and of being subsidized by the French ministers. And while ostensibly offering an olive branch of peace to him managed to convey several insults.

The subject matter of the Gazette is much like that of the Political Censor. There are articles in support of England and designed as usual to indicate to the public that England was the real ally to whom the United States should bind themselves. The issue of March 4 has an article on the subject of British commerce and finance showing that reports as to the ruined commerce and exhausted finances of Great Britain are merely false rumors

1. Porcupine's Works. V, pp. 5-6.
2. Ibid. p. 7.

instigated by the French.

In the March 6th issue appeared a full account of the inauguration of the President with the inaugural speeches. In succeeding issues there appeared notices of Washington's triumphal tour. Cobbett kept up a vigorous defense of Washington.

A vigorous defender was surely needed for the anti-Federalists stopped at nothing. One of the basest accusations appeared in a letter published in the Aurora on March 13th. It accused Washington of murder by firing on a messenger carrying a flag of truce while in command of a group of officers in 1754. Cobbett went to great lengths to prove that the accusation was a base and groundless one.

Cobbett was gravely disturbed over the entry of contaminating French ideas. He was especially disturbed by the number of divorces in France which "an inquiry made last year at Doctors' Commons showed "that all the divorces in the kingdom of Great Britain, for a hundred years, amounted to no more than one fifth of those which took place in the single city of Paris in three months, from the day that France was nicknamed a republic."[1] He foresaw the spread of such doctrines in the United States, and issued the following warning in the March 21st issue:

> . . . At the last session of the legislature of Georgia, when there were no more than thirty acts passed, five were made to separate husbands and wives. These are certain marks of rottenness at the core, which, if not resisted by some potent application, will produce evils not to be remedied but by excision. Read your fate, ye Georgians, in the history of St. Domingo.[1]

1. Ibid. p. 112.

The paper carried accounts of various French outrages such as seizures of American vessels. None can be found, however, concerning similar British seizures.

Peter Porcupine had meanwhile acquired a new enemy. This was Noah Webster who had begun to publish the Minerva in New York. Webster made little use of invective or epithet, and his arguments are very strong. In the exchange of opinions which followed, it cannot but be felt that Webster scored although his letter is but four pages compared to Cobbett's twenty-five. Neither offered much that was new, and Cobbett's reply was mainly another attack on France.

Webster spoke plainly and admitted the need of commercial relations with Great Britain as a matter of expediency, but condemned any efforts at establishing an offensive or defensive alliance with her. Cobbett was unable to appreciate this stand since it seemed to favor France. He took Webster to task for this:

> If my worthy patron, Bradford, is to be believed, your old friend and partner in the language trade.[1] Doctor Franklin was six weeks in Congress before anyone could divine whether he was a Whig or Tory; and I have frequently been at a loss to guess, such a compound is your politics, whether I ought to class you among the Federalists or Democrats. If these words have any meaning, as applied to you, you are a Democrat in principle, and a Federalist for convenience.[2]

Cobbett occasionally left the subject of the vileness of French Republicanism to treat of other matters. The Yazoo Land Frauds were the subject of one article; he severely condemned the Legislature of Georgia for re-

1. Cobbett constantly harped on this and was furious at attempts to establish an American language.
2. Porcupine's Works, V. p. 166.

scinding the law selling the lands, thereby leaving innocent second purchasers to suffer. He was especially exercised over the fact that many English investors thereby suffered.

> Such are republican legislators, such is republican virtue, and such is the government which a rebellion against George the Third has brought on the people of America.[1]

Cobbett had an Englishman's bitter hate for the Irish and never lost an opportunity to attack them. The Gazette has numerous references to the pauper Irish who were coming to America, and to the danger brought to our institutions by their coming. Cobbett even wrote a pamphlet: Detection of a Conspiracy formed by the United Irishmen: with the evident intention of aiding the Tyrants of France in subverting the Government of the United States of America. This pamphlet was reprinted in London. According to Cobbett the French republicans were selecting the Irish as their instruments since the native Americans were either not ambitious enough or not enough poverty-stricken:

> Real, sincere villainy, then without property, without principles, without country, and without character; dark and desperate, unnatural and bloodthirsty ruffians; these were what they wanted; and where could they have sought them with such certainty of success, as amongst that restless, rebellious tribe, the emigrated UNITED IRISHMEN?

In the constitution of the order, which he gives in full, Cobbett saw the dark, diabolical design of a plan to overthrow the United States Government.

> An invasion on the coast is a thing naturally to be expected, unless an alliance is formed with

1. Ibid. VII, p. 182.

> Great Britain; and from Louisiana or the Floridas is to expected whether such an alliance takes place or not. . . .

Cobbett was certain that all kinds of dangers and final certain destruction awaited the United States "unless an alliance was formed with Great Britain." He never ceased to preach this lesson.

Cobbett had by this time become rabidly anti-Republican. As a headline for a list of convictions in the Circuit Court at Albany for the not unusual crimes of passing counterfeit money, burglary, horse-stealing and larceny he has "Republican Morality;" the implication being probably that such crimes are peculiar to republicanism.[1]

The subject of slavery afforded Peter Porcupine many opportunities to criticize America. The announcement of the arrival of a cargo of slaves is headed in derision "Pure Liberty."[2] Runaway slave advertisements drew forth bitter comments from him.

Porcupine's Gazette became so fiercely anti-republican that it embarassed even the Federalists. President Adams in 1799 suggested that he be deported under the Alien Law. Only the remonstrances of the Attorney-General prevented the carrying out of the suggestion. Adam's project came to the ears of Cobbett, and he seemed to realize that the end of his career in America might be at hand, for he began to prepare for such an emergency by

1. Ibid. VII, pp. 188-189.
2. Ibid. VII, p. 190.

converting his property into cash or transferring it to New York. One thing he knew for certain and that was that Philadelphia had become too warm to hold him, and he prepared to leave that city and set himself up in business inNew York.

Certain aspects of American justice were also reported such as a fine of 45 l. for the murder of a negro slave. Cobbett was exceedingly wroth over this and cited it as an example of republican law, justice, and humanity.

We would say today that Cobbett was rendering effective service against quackery. In the issue of Sept. 23, 1797 he remarks on the sudden prosperity of the self-created Doctor Leib in Germantown, and resolves that Doctor Leib shall never treat him.

The first notice of the great quarrel with Dr. Rush appeared on Sept. 19, 1797. Cobbett attacked the practice then current among the medical profession of drawing blood from the patient for every ailment. It was not Rush alone whom Cobbett attacked, but all those who, he said, were murdering people by bleeding them to death and by administering drugs containing mercury. Hardly an issue went by without an attack upon the practice of bleeding and those who defended it. The personalities of the physicians naturally became subject to Cobbett's attention and if anything he was more bitter against them than his political opponents. We shall have more to say a little later in connection with his attack upon Rush, for it was the cause of the end of his American career. The yellow fever continued to rage in Philadelphia, and Cobbett con-

tinued to call attention to the error of treating it in the way Rush and his followers were doing.

Porcupine's Gazette continued its course for nearly three years. It was consistent in its principles from the beginning to the end of its career. The paper soon secured a large circulation; but, when it came to an end, Cobbett stated that he had never made a penny by it. Indeed, the same is true of every newspaper of the period. Subscribers were very slow in paying for their subscriptions and many are the pathetic notices and demands in which editors pleaded for the payment of subscriptions. For Cobbett, with no capital behind him, journalism was uphill work. However, Cobbett's violence made him so many enemies that there were some who believed him to be a dangerous ally.

CHAPTER VIII

PROSECUTION FOR LIBEL

Cobbett was bound to get into difficulties sooner or later. His first difficulty arose toward the end of 1797; it was an attempt to indict him for criminal libel. Cobbett had gained for a confirmed enemy Thomas M'Kean, Chief Justice of the State of Pennsylvania. M'Kean was a violent Republican and his personal reputation was not of the best. He had long sought an opportunity to check Cobbett who was sparing no pains in reminding the public of the defects of M'Kean's character.

Cobbett had added as a new national enemy Spain, because of its subserviency to France. Cobbett personalised his attack as usual venting his wrath on the Spanish Minister, Don Carlos Martizez d' Yrujo, whom he called "Don Sans-Culotta de Carmagnola Minor" in recognition of Spanish subserviency to France. In the attacks upon d'Yrujo and the Spanish king, M'Kean believed he saw an opportunity to punish Peter Porcupine. He was especially anxious to avenge the attacks upon d'Yrujo since the latter was about to marry his daughter. Accordingly Cobbett was served with a bill of indictment charging him with defaming His Catholic Majesty the King of Spain, his envoy Don Carlos Martinez d'Yrujo, and the Spanish nation, with the object of alienating their affections and regard from the Government and citizens of the United States.

Cobbett was arrested at very short notice, but despite this attempt to persecute him managed quickly to secure bail. The case dragged for some months; it finally came to trial in November before the Grand Jury. M'Kean was desperately anxious for a conviction and his charge to the jury overlooked all the other crimes on the calendar emphasizing that of libel. His charge is interesting and is, in part, as follows:

> Everyone who has in him the sentiments of either a Christian or a gentleman, cannot but be highly offended at the envenomed scurrility that has raged in pamphlets and newspapers, printed in Philadelphia for several years past, insomuch, that libelling has become a kind of national crime, and distinguishes us not only from all the States around us, but from the whole civilized world. Our satire has been nothing but ribaldry and Billingsgate: the contest has been, who could call names in the greatest variety of phrases; who could mangle the greatest number of characters; or who could excel in the magnitude and virulence of their lies. Hence the honour of families has been stained; the highest posts rendered cheap and vile in the sight of the people, and the greatest services and virtue blasted. This evil, so scandalous to our government, and detestable in the eyes of all good men, calls aloud for redress. To censure the licentiousness is to maintain the liberty of the press.
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> At a time when misunderstandings prevail between the Republics of France and the United States, and when our General Government have appointed public ministers to endeavour their removal, and restore the former harmony, some of the journals or newspapers in the City of Philadelphia, have teemed with the most irritating invectives, couched in the most vulgar and oppobrious language, not only against the French nation and their allies, but the very men in power with whom the ministers of our country are sent to negotiate. These publications have an evident tendency not only to frustrate a reconciliation, but to create a rupture, and provoke a war between the sister republics, and seem calculated to vilify, nay, to subvert all republican governments whatever.
>
> Impressed with the duties of my station, I have used some endeavours for checking these evils, by binding over the editor and printer of one of them, licentious and virulent beyond all former ex-

> ample, to his good behaviour; but he still perseveres in his nefarious publications; he has ransacked our language for terms of insult and reproach, and for the basest accusations against every ruler and distinguished character in France and Spain with whom we chance to have any intercourse, which it is scarce in nature to forgive; in brief, he braves his recognizance and the laws. It is now with you, gentlemen of the Grand Jury, to animadvert on his conduct; without your aid it cannot be corrected. The government that will not discountenance, may be thought to adopt it, and be deemed justly chargeable with all the consequences.[1]

The bill of indictment charged "William Cobbett, late of the City of Philadelphia, in the County of Philadelphia, yeoman, being a person of wicked and turbulent disposition" with "maliciously designing and intending to vilify and defame the person, character, and government of his Catholic Majesty Charles the Fourth, King of Spain, and to disturb the peace and amity now happily subsisting between the same and the United States of America".[2] He was also charged with attempting "to vilify and defame the person and character of Don Carlos Martinez d'Yrujo, the Minister Plenipotentiary and Envoy Extraordinary from his Catholic Majesty" to the United States by causing to be printed and published a "certain scandalous, false and malicious libel" concerning d'Yrujo and the King of Spain in the Porcupine's Gazette on July 17, and July 24, 1797.

The bill quoted the libellous passages, labelling the following one as containing "divers of false, feigned, scandalous and malicious matters:"

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1. Wharton, Francis. State Trials of the UnitedStates during the Administrations of Washington and Adams.
2. Ibid. p. 326.

> Ever since Spain has been governed by princes of the Bourbon family, the Spanish name has been disgraced in peace and war; every important measure has been directed by the crooked politics of France. This connection, like the obscene harpies of old, contaminates whatever it touches. But never has this been so conspicuous as in the present reign, and more especially at the present period. The degenerate prince that now sways the Spanish sceptre (thereby meaning his Catholic Majesty, the said King of Spain), whom the French (the French Republic, meaning) have kept on the throne merely as a trophy of their power, or as a butt of their insolence, seems destitute not only of the dignity of a king, but of the common virtues of a man. Not content with allying himself to the murderers of a benevolent prince, who was the flower of his family, he . . . has become the supple tool of all their . . . nefarious politics. As the sovereign . . . so is the minister abroad (meaning the said Don Carlos Martinez d'Yrujo . . .). The one . . . is governed like a dependent by the nod of the five despots at Paris, and the other . . . by the directions of the French agent in America. Because these infidel tyrants . . . had thought proper to rob and insult this country and its government, and we have thought proper, I am sorry to add, to submit to it, the obsequious imitative Don must attempt the same, in order to participate in the guilt, and lessen the infamy, of his masters . . . .[1]

The bill also cited among others this passage:

> In the present state of things, the independence of the United States is little more than a shadow; it . . . is really not worth what is cost to acquire and support it; and, unless a stop can be put to the progress of faction and foreign interference . . . instead of a blessing, it . . . will ere long be a burden which even the vassals of Prussia would not take off our hands as a gift.[1]

The list of witnesses to the indictment to the bill is headed by Thomas M'Kean, and has on it also William Bradford, Cobbett's old enemy. Despite their testimony and the rancorous charge to the jury by M'Kean, the Grand Jury refused to indict Cobbett. According to Wharton the acquittal was due to the party division in the Grand Jury; the Federalists, in a majority of one, voted for

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1. Ibid. p. 327.

an ignoramus, thus defeating the Republicans who all voted for a true bill.[1]

Cobbett, of course, did not fail to answer M'Kean. In a pamphlet called The Republican Judge: or the American Liberty of the Press as Exhibited, Explained, and Exposed, in the base and partial prosecution of William Cobbett, for a pretended Libel against the King of Spain and his Embassador, before the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania he set forth his opinion of M'Kean and his other persecutors. The pamphlet is dated April 10, 1798 and begins with an Address to the People of England in which Cobbett warns the English people to beware of praises "extolling the excellence of Republican Governments" and assuring them that they are "happier and more free than the people of America."

Concerning the liberty of the press he says:

> . . . No people understand what the libery of the press means better than the Americans do. No one knows so well how to estimate the value of a thing, as he who has long enjoyed it, and then lost it. Had the Judge called the liberty of the press a thing much talked about, much boasted of, and very little enjoyed, I would most readily have subscribed to his assertion; for of all the countries under the sun, where unlicensed presses are tolerated, I am bold to declare, and the contents of this pamphlet will establish the truth of my declaration, that none ever enjoyed less real liberty of the press than America has for some years past.[2]

According to Cobbett the liberty of the press has not been abridged by positive law, but "some how or other,

1. Ibid. p. 329.
2. The Republican Judge, p. 78.

this liberty has been abridged; the exercise of it, either by popular prejudice, by the influence of party, the fear of mobish violence, or of governmental tyranny, has been, and yet is, most shamefully and disgracefully restrained." Yet to a modern reader it would seem that no freer press, perhaps, ever existed than that which held sway for this short period. It was restraining only to a person like Cobbett whose pen could never recognise any bounds of the permissible.

After this introduction Cobbett enters into an account of the attacks against him commencing with the opening of his book-shop. He quotes the threatening letter sent to his landlord John Aldden, and the attacks made upon him in the Aurora by the "wretch Bache the grandson and pupil of Old Franklin." Coming to the attempt to indict him, he enters upon a sketch of the "Republican Judge," that is, M'Kean:

> This is the place to give some account of this Republican Judge.
>
> His Grandfather was an Irishman, who emigrated by the consent of his Majesty and twelve good and true men. He himself was born in the State of Delaware, and was for some years an hostler . . . at Chester. He was successivly, a Constable, a Sheriff, a Justice of the Peace, and a Pettifogger, in which last capacity the Revolutionists found him a man fit for their purposes. After having seen MARAT a legislator, and DANTON a minister of Justice, in France, no one will be surprised that M'Kean should have become a Congress-man and Chief Justice of Pennsylvania, during the American Revolution. It was he who was guilty of the legal murder of the two Quakers Roberts and Carlisle: he has been a persecutor of this inoffensive sect from that day to this: he was the principal promoter of all the cruel laws and confiscations in Pennsylvania, and he now lives in a confiscated house.. . . His private character is infamous. He beats his wife, and she beats him. . . . He is a notorious drunkard.

> The whole bar, one lawyer excepted, signed a memorial to the Legislature, stating, that so great a drunkard was he, that, after dinner, person and property were not safe in Pennsylvania. He has been horsewhipped in the city tavern, and kicked in the street, for his insolence to particular persons; and yet this degraded wretch is Chief Justice of the State. Why the Spanish Minister was anxious to get PORCUPINE tried before him is plain. It was well known, that he harboured a mortal rancour against him for the just censure he had received at his hands; and it is now known, that this very Spanish Minister, a most contemptible animal, is to be married to his daughter. These were the reasons why the Federal Government were requested to suffer the cause to be tried before M'KEAN, and why a new prosecution was set on foot.[1]

The rest of the pamphlet gives an account of the trial quoting all the documents and the libellous passages at length, and gives a long discussion of M'Kean's conduct. As is usual with Cobbett he reverts to previously discussed subjects, and therefore we find here a reconsideration of Priestley's Emigration and Callender's Political Progress of Great Britain. He adds little new save to characterise Callender as "this little reptile, who, from outward appearances, seems to have been born for a chimney sweep." The pamphlet is not one of Cobbett's best since his strongest argument is a tu quoque justification of himself which is weak at best.

The Republican Judge was a vigorous piece of writing, perhaps too vigorous. M'Kean bound him over to be of good behavior in recognizance of four thousand dollars.

Meanwhile the Rush affair was developing. Towards the end of the century Philadelphia became subject to

1. Republican Judge. pp. 22-23.

severe visitations of the yellow fever. In 1793 there had been four thousand deaths in three months. Knowing nothing in that day of microbes or the agency of mosquitoes in the carrying of the disease, physicians developed several different courses of treatment. Amongst these systems that of Dr. Benjamin Rush attracted great attention. It consisted in the administration of "mercurial purges" followed by copious bleeding. Rush maintained that this treatment cured ninety-nine out of every hundred cases that he treated; the greater likelihood is that any patient who recovered did so in spite of the doctor's treatment. Indeed, all of the systems offered were of a wonderful and novel nature and probably aided the yellow fever itself in killing so many thousands.

In 1797 the fever returned with similar fatal results. Bleeding again became the rage, though several doctors by this time began to attack the practice. Porcupine's Gazette printed letters from various physicians against the custom. A Dr. William Currie implored his fellow to "open their eyes" to the almost invariably fatal results of bleeding.

Whether Cobbett was entirely motivated by his zeal for medicine in his intervention in the professional controversy that was going on over Rush's remedy is difficult to say. Rush, however, in addition to being one of the greatest American physicians of the time, was also eminent as a politician. Like M'Kean he was a signer of the Declaration of Independence, and had become a strong

Republican. He was a Quaker and a friend of Thomas Paine and a leading member of the Democratic Society of Philadelphia. These things alone were enough to incur the displeasure of the "British Corporal," and he was therefore attacked with great vigor. Even Smith, who has made Cobbett a hero in most other respects, seems to show a faint doubt as to whether Cobbett's motives in his opposition to Doctor Rush were wholly dictated by his medical practices, and implies faintly that the latter may have merely been a handle for an attack on his politics.[1]

Cobbett in a short time succeeded in making Rush extremely uncomfortable. The anti-Federalist papers hastened to Rush's defense while Fenno joined Cobbett in his attack; it would thus appear that the issue was perhaps more a political than a medical one. Cobbett's reading enabled him to find a classic parallel for the zealous phlebotomist. "Dr. Sangrado" in Gil Blas furnished Cobbett with an apt comparison. "Dr. Sangrado" will be remembered for his great advocacy of bleeding for every sort of disease or disorder; he drew several porringers of blood at time and is famous for his strange opinions. Cobbett ridiculed him with a scurrility which would be contemptible were it not so happily pointed. One remark in particular infuriated Rush. With fatal pride he had adverted to his remedy in several journals as the "Samson of Medicine." Cobbett promptly rejoined

1. Smith. I, p. 211.

that the title was fitting for in the hands of Rush and his followers it had slain more Americans than Samson had slain Philistines.

Rush could endure no more. Lest his fame and practice should be irretrievably damaged he was forced to speak out. In October 1797 he commenced a suit for libel against Cobbett in the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. Cobbett knowing that this court was biased applied to have his case removed to the next Federal Circuit Court on the ground that he was an alien. M'Kean rejected this petition, but the trial was put off, and did not come up for nearly two years. Cobbett alleged that there were two reasons for the delay, the first of which was to keep the threat hanging over him and so check his freedom of utterance, for, it will be remembered, Cobbett had been bound over in four thousand dollars. If this was M'Kean's motive then it certainly did not work for Cobbett used the interval to make fresh attacks on Rush and everybody connected with the case. Secondly, Cobbett charged that M'Kean was waiting to assure himself of a packed jury to avoid a repetition of the fiasco in the attempt to indict Cobbett.

M'Kean had been elected Governor of Pennsylvania. Cobbett became convinced that the influences against him were too strong, and, as we have seen, began to transfer his effects to New York, and remained only in Philadelphia to await the trial. In the Fall of 1799 he was assured that the trial would go over to the next sessions.

He therefore suspended publication of Porcupine's Gazette and left for New York intending to revive the paper there. But the trial was hurried on now to prevent the removal of all his property, and Cobbett returned.

The trial opened on December 13, 1799. The new Chief Justice, Shippen, was a Republican and a friend of M'Kean. "But there is no need to seek for an explanation of the verdict by disparaging the impartiality of the tribunal. The malice of the libel was so obvious that no adequate defence was possible."[1]

Cobbett was represented by Edward Tilghman and a Mr. Brown; Tilghman had just been defeated by John Swanwick in the election for Congress. Their pleas have not been preserved, although Cobbett is known to have imputed the verdict to the treachery of one of his counsel.[2]

Shippen in his charge to the jury showed that Cobbett's action was in itself indefensible. He dwelt strongly upon the imputation of personal malice. Cobbett, he said, had made no attempt to combat Rush's system by argument; he had not gone into the merits of his method of cure, nor had he advanced any medical reasons against Rush's remedy. Cobbett had confined himself to personal abuse of Doctor Rush and had called him repeatedly a quack, and a pretender. He had attacked Rush's private character, made sport of the humbleness of his origin, and held his personal manners up to ridicule.

The defense had contended that there was no indica-

1. Carlyle. p. 71.
2. Smith, I, p. 216.

tion of malice, and that the subject of dispute was a matter of public concern. But Cobbett's on Rush's private character was held by Shippen to be a disproof of the former plea, and at the same time removed the libel from the class of attacks properly defended by the latter.

A verdice was rendered in favor of Doctor Rush, and damages of five thousand dollars and costs was assessed against Cobbett. While it may be said that prejudice did not influence the verdict, it is certainly true that prejudice was shown in the speed with which effect was given to the verdict. Cobbett's good were seized and sold within nine days. The verdict nearly ruined Cobbett, although later political sympathizers in Canada repaid him the damages and his expenses.[1] Cobbett had not been able to remove all his property to New York, and everything in Philadelphia was sold by auction and naturally realized considerably less than their value. A whole impression of Porcupine's Works, his collected edition of his American writings, lying in sheets awaiting issue, was sold as waste paper and destroyed; he did not treat this matter as lightly as he had the destruction of Priestley's manuscripts at Birmingham. He later published the Works in London.

Cobbett returned to New York financially embarrassed; the expenses of the trial had been almost three thousand

1. Political Register. April 10, 1830.

dollars. But he began at once energetically to lay the foundation of a new business in New York, and it did not seem that he was intending a return to England.

In January of 1800 he issued a farewell number of Porcupine's Gazette and announced that since he had published it only for public reasons and had never reaped any financial benefit from it he would discontinue its publication.

On February 15, 1800, he issued the first number of a new periodical entitled the Rushlight. It was intended to appear fortnighly, and five issues of it did appear. As its title indicates it was a play on words and was aimed at Doctor Rush. It was devoted wholly to a voluminous and more argumentative attack on Doctor Rush, dealing both with his political opinions and medical skill. He had learned by this time to increase the proportion of medical argument to abuse. He gave a full account of the trial with comments on its conduct and severe criticism of Chief Justice Shippen and the M'Kean influence. He made one telling argument: on the day the jury gave its verdict against him, George Washington was dying under Doctor Rush's famous treatment, though the cause of death was given as "malignant sore throat" and "lack of strength."

The Rushlight was well received by the public which enjoyed the spicy detail with which it was filled. Cobbett seems to have been in a fair way to success. In a letter to his agent in London, John Wright, on May 9, 1800, he

enclosed a substantial remittance for his order of books.[1]

But the severity of the verdict had upset Cobbett.[2] He found his position in New York far from comfortable, and he was seized with a great longing for England. He had so long praised that country that he had ended by believing his own eulogies. His work in America had restored him to favor in England; and he had received numerous invitations to return. On June 1, 1800 he sailed for England.

As he went, he sent to the American papers a characteristic open letter.

> When people care not two straws for each other, ceremony at parting is a mere grimace; and as I have long felt the most perfect indifference with regard to a vast majority of those whom I now address, I shall spare myself the trouble of a ceremonious farewell. Let me not, however, depart from you with indiscriminating contempt. If no man ever had so many and such malignant foes, no one ever had more friends, and those more kind, more sincere, and more faithful. If I have been unjustly vilified by some, others have extolled me far beyond my merits; it the savages of the city have scared my children in the cradle, those children have, for their father's sake, been soothed and caressed by the affectionate, the gentle, the generous inhabitants of the country, under whose roofs I have spent some of the happiest hours of my life.
>
> Thus and thus, Americans, will I ever speak of you. In a very little time, I shall be beyond the reach of your friendship, or your malice; beyond the hearing of your commendations or your curses; but being out of your power will alter neither my sentiments nor my work. As I have never spoken any thing but truth to you, so I will never speak any thing but truth of you: the heart of a Briton revolts at an emulation in baseness; and though you have, as a nation, treated me most ungratefully and unjustly, I scorn to repay you with ingratitude and injustice.
>
> To my friends, who are also the real friends of America, I wish that peace and happiness which virtue ought to ensure, but which, I greatly fear, they will

1. Smith. I, pp. 229-230.
2. He had anticipated a verdict for damagesof less than $400.00.

> not find; and as to my enemies, I can wish them no severer scourge than that which they are preparing for themselves and their country. With this I depart for my native land, where neither the moth of Democracy, nor the rust of Federalism doth corrupt, and where thieves do not, with impunity, break through and steal five thousand dollars at a time.[1]

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1. Porcupine's Works. XII, p. 1.

CHAPTER IX

CONCLUSION

In fairness to the reader of these pages it must be pointed out that very much of what is true of 'Cobbett in America' is not true of the whole of Cobbett's career. His American career and indeed his career in England upon the first few years of his return are merely a preliminary phase of his life. It is even questionable whether the setting off of the American phase from the rest of his life is strictly justifiable.

Cobbett was at heart a radical, not a conservative. That in America he should have become a defender of the established order, suspicious of novelty, is explainable, perhaps, by two facts. The first of these is the enchantment lent by distance to all that was English. He was notivated much more by patriotism than by conservatism. Gilbert K. Chesterton has recognized this fact and he says of Cobbett:

> He did not defend England because England was monarchical and he was a Royalist, or because England was aristocratic and he was a snob, or because England was the home of Toryism and he was a Tory. He defended England because England was attacked and he was an Englishman; and his real rage was reserved for other Englishmen who attacked her, or seemed to him not sufficiently to defend her. For thisreason he extravagantly abused Dr. Priestley, for this reason he extravagantly abused Tom Paine. . . . For this reason he lectured the wondering people of that western land about the beauty of the British Constitution, of British laws, of British landlords, of British military policy, in fact, that he was afterwards famous for rending and rolling in the mud.[1]

1. Chesterton, G. K. William Cobbett. pp. 65-66.

Secondly, Cobbett, like so many of his contemporaries, was affected by the horror of the Reign of Terror in France. For centuries France had been the hereditary foe of England, and no Englishman could be expected to have a very great love for the inhabitants of the land beyond the Channel. Even had there been no French Revolution Cobbett would probably have had no great love for France or the things that were French. It is difficult not to quote the piquant Chesterton again on this point as he describes Cobbett in France:

> He was in France during the French Revolution; amid all that world of carnage and classical quotations, of Greek names and very Latin riots. He must have looked, as he stood there with his big heavy figure and black beaver hat, as solemn and solid a specimen as ever was seen of the Englishman abroad -- the sort of Englishman who is very much abroad. He went to America just after the American Revolution; and played the part of the old Tory farmer, waving the beaver hat and calling on those astonished republicans for three cheers for King George. Everywhere, amid all that dance of humanitarian hopes, he seemed like a survival and a relic of times gone by. And he alone was in living touch with the times that were to come.[1]

Upon his arrival in England he was welcomed by Pitt and for a short time was a Conservative; but his true feelings soon began to assert themselves and in a few years he became a Radical and was one of the leaders of the reform movement which had its culmination in the Reform Bill of 1832. But as long as he remained in America he was a strong foe of democracy. Republicanism was anethema to him. British government seemed to him to be perfect; he continually pointed out the advantages of such a form of government as compared with that which the

1. Ibid. p. 16.

Republicans were trying to introduce.

Edward Smith, the biographer of Cobbett, says:

> As a champion of the liberty of the press, Mr. Cobbett holds a place among the very foremost; and, indeed, a minor object of the biographer in this history to establish his claim to that place.[1]

Smith represents him as the champion because of the libel suits to which he was subjected and because of the mob violence which tried to intimidate Cobbett; and he takes great exception also to the popular prejudice against him on account of his being an Englishman.

Henry Cabot Lodge answers this point of view proving the opinion and criticism unfounded and wrong.

> . . . As to the first point, it should be remembered that mobs and libel suits were then the recognized method of meeting political attacks in the press, and on the only occasion when Cobbett was actually brought before the courts on a political charge the jury threw out the bill. In the case of Dr. Rush the libel suit was perfectly proper, and would be so to-day; and the fact that Cobbett was right on a point of medical practice, and the Doctor wrong, does not touch the question in the least. Broken windows and public prosecutions are rude methods of conducting political discussions, but they were everywhere fashionable in the eighteenth century and were particularly so in London. They certainly did not restrain Cobbett's freedom of speech materially, and he was but one of many who defied them, and paved the way for their disuse. Cobbett, indeed, suffered far less than his opponents; and the scurrilous Callender, who went to prison for his famous and abusive "Prospect before us," really endured much more than Cobbett in behalf of what Mr. Smith styles the "liberty of the Press."
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> That Cobbett should have been disliked because he was an Englishman was, under the circumstances, not only natural but proper. No people with an ounce of self-respect care to be lectured daily by a foreigner about their own affairs; and Cobbett not

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1. Smith. I, p. 197.

> only did this, but he refused to be naturalized, and dinned into the public ear the fact that he was an Englishman, and proposed to remain so.[1]

It is rather as the founder of our party press, and as an exponent of party politics of the period that Cobbett acquires interest and importance in American history, and not as the champion of free speech. As has been pointed out Cobbett did not suffer severely from the law until the Rush case. As for mobs, Cobbett seems to have enjoyed them and particularly to have enjoyed baiting the mob. He certainly did not show any restraint because of repressive influences of which he spoke.

While there had been some attempt at the founding of a party press, no really political organ had developed. Fenno supported Hamiltonian policies, it is true, but he was primarily interested in his Gazette of the United States as a newspaper and not as an organ of the Federalist party. Freneau had attempted a truly political organ but with very little success. He was unable to gain any popular support for his publication, and when Jefferson was compelled to withdraw his support from it, the paper soon failed. Benjamin Franklin Bache's Aurora was a political paper, but it had become so largely in order to answer Cobbett.

Cobbett was the first to come out plainly, and announce that his paper stood for one political idea. As we have seen he made no pretense at non-partisanship. Porcupine's Gazette stood plainly by all the policies of the Federalist party. Indeed, it had been founded for the

1. Lodge, Henry Cabot. Studies in History. pp. 122-123.

one purpose of uttering Federalist ideas and doctrine, and Cobbett made in clear that Porcupine's Gazette would stick to its objective.

Taking their lead from Cobbett, his opponents sprang to the defense of the Democratic Republican party and the era of the party press was fairly well begun. Bache in the Aurora and others in New York and Boston began to devote more and more attention to politic proselyting. This movement was also helped by the establishment of magazines in this period. This relieved the newspapers of their task of catering to the literary tastes of their readers and left them free to devote more and more of their attention to political matters.

Politically Cobbett's influence was toward the sharper division of party lines and the crystallization of each party around a certain definite group of thoughts and ideals. Cobbett defined clearly the Federalist position. No person could labor under a misapprehension after having read the writings of Peter Porcupine. He understood clearly what the Federalists stood for.

The clarification of issues resulted also in a great deal of bitterness, a bitterness, indeed, which at this day can hardly be comprehended. Politics became an integral part of men's daily activities; it was taken in an exceedingly serious manner. Fed by the fires of newspaper controversy, the interest grew even higher and feeling more bitter.

The political journalism introduced by Cobbett had for its core the discussion of personalities. Cobbett

tended to personalize any issue, since in this way his particular fitness for controversy could best make itself. His example was followed in this respect and there ensued a period of violent abuse; so violent and abusive, in fact, that we can only gasp in astonishment at what we read.

Critics have often looked for a resemblance between Swift's style and Cobbett's, but they differ more than they resemble each other. Swift's style is more polished and rhythmical, and it is more carefully balanced. Cobbett is direct, like Swift, and like him is a master of plain speaking in pure English. But that is as far as the resemblance goes. Cobbett does not arrange his thoughts in orderly array; rather he lets his words flow on from point to point occasionally crashing into thunders of pointed phrases and stinging abuse. He does not always find just the word or make his sentences telling, but after he is finished the reader has no excuse for not knowing exactly what Cobbett meant.

> As a writer Cobbett belongs to the School of Swift, for whose "Tale of Tub" he sacrificed his supper; but he is far from being Swift's equal, for the Dean was a great genius and Cobbett was not. The pupil has neither the refinements of style nor the keenness of satire for which the master is still preëminent. But Cobbett possessed in ample measure Swift's simplicity of diction and strength of phrase, and he used pure Saxon to an extent and with a power which is well worth study at the present day. The great superiority of a plain nervous English style in argument of any sort, and above all in political controversy . . . receives ample confirmation in the writings of Cobbett.[1]

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1. Lodge. p. 131.

G. K. Chesterton with some humor and much more truth has said of Cobbett's style:

> Many professors have in a merely literary sense recognised Cobbett as a model; but few have modelled themselves upon their model. They were always ready to hope that their pupils would write such good English. But they would have been mildly surprised if any pupil had written such plain English. Yet, as I have pointed out on that occasion, the strongest quality of Cobbett as a stylist is in the use he made of a certain kind of language: the sort of use commonly called abuse. It is especially his bad language that is always good. It is precisely the passages that especially that have always been recognized as good style that would now be regarded as bad form. And it is precisely these violent passages that especially bring out not only the best capacities of Cobbett but also the best capacities of English.[1]

Cobbett had an unrivalled power of pointing his argument with an apt allusion, a nickname which clung inescapably, or a cutting personal reference. His peculiar fitness for rough conflict is obvious, and it opened to him a career as a popular political controversialist. His opponents seldom were able to worst him, for he was "fully as coarse as they and much more original and racy, with a far better command of language and no mean capacity for very telling satire."[2] He was not detached enough to be a satirist, but as a controversialist he had few rivals.

We can conclude this paper in no better way, perhaps, than with the keen, sympathetic and yet iminently just appraisal of Henry Cabot Lodge, himself no mean master of the use of forceful language. At one point in his essay on Cobbett he says:

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1. William Cobbett. pp. 6-7
2. Lodge. p. 121.

> Cobbett's courage, patriotism, independence, and singleness of heart and purpose are obvious at a glance; and so are his faults, for there is nothing intricate or subtle about the man. His low beginnings, his half-education, his wonderful success, and the intoxication of unbounded popular influence developed an egotism that was simply colossal. It is not offensive, for it is so gigantic, so simple, and so apparent that no one can be angered by it. But, united as it was with a hot head and an impetuous disposition, it made Cobbett not only impracticable in the active management of affairs, but utterly unable to work with others. He quarreled with every one with whom he came in contact, whenever there was any question of leadership or difference of views. He would never sacrifice an opinion or alter a plan. This inability to deal with his fellow-men warped his character and diminished his usefulness, or rather confined it to the one field where it was much better that he should act alone and upon his own unaided judgment.[1]

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1. Studies in History. p.129.

SUMMARY

William Cobbett was born in 1762 of British peasant stock. He received no formal education, but read widely. Discontented with farm life he left his home and went to London. Growing restless there because of his sedentary occupation, he enlisted in the army.

While in the Army he continued his self-education, instructing himself by diligent mastery and memorizing of rules of grammar, etc. His regiment was stationed in Nova Scotia, and while he was in America he became cognizant of the corruption pervading the army. Unaware that this was a general, universally condoned condition in the British service he attempted to secure reforms. He made copies of the records of his regiment, having been advanced to a position of trust because of his superiority to his officers in writing and reckoning. Upon the return of the regiment to England he made his charges, but becoming rapidly convinced that it was he who would be on trial and not the corrupt officers, he fled to France.

From France he went to America, first having seen something of the French Revolution and formed a bitter hatred of French Republican principles. He was followed to America by his wife whom he had married shortly before his flight from England. He settled permanently at Philadelphia where he made a living by teaching English to French emigres.

The arrival of Dr. Priestley in America and the

reception accorded him aroused Cobbett to answer the Democrats who had so warmly welcomed Priestley. In a pamphlet entitled Observations on Priestley's Emigration he made a violent attack upon Dr. Priestley, the French Revolution, and democratic principles in general. This pamphlet launched him into a career of political pamphleteering.

His antipathies to the principles espoused by the Democratic Republican Party, their democratic principles and their hatred of Great Britain, naturally caused Cobbett to devote himself to the Federalist Party, that of the aristocratic and mercantile classes. This period in America was characterized by the rise of political parties and party organs. The Federalists were largely representative of the financial, creditor, and mercantile classes while the Democrats were representative of the agricultural, debtor classes.

Cobbett became the great champion of England. He pointed out the advantages of a commercial alliance with England as against the lack of advantage accruing from an alliance with France. He showed also the advantages which would come from a military alliance with England, and pointed out that an alliance with France was dangerous.

He issued three pamphlets all dealing with the same general subject. In them he continued his invectives against the Democrats. Their title's indicative of their subject are: A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats, A Little Plain English, and A Vindication of Mr. Randolph's Resignation; the latter being an attack on Randolph.

In 1796 Cobbett quarreled with the Bradfords who had published his pamphlets. He thereupon opened up his own book-shop and began publication on his own account.

About this time he was approached by Talleyrand who endeavored to bribe him to discontinue his attacks on France. Cobbett scornfully repudiated the suggestion and continued his attacks in his next pamphlet The Scare Crow.

Cobbett had taken the pseudonym of "Peter Porcupine" when he wrote A Bone to Gnaw for the Democrats. He now acknowledged his pseudonym, and thereupon became the target of many slanderous and scurrilous attacks. In defence he published his Life and Adventures of Peter Porcupine, an autobiography of his life. He continued to write pamphlets and attacked Thomas Paine for the latter's remarks against President Washington. He continued a monthly periodical begun while he was with the Bradfords, now calling it the Political Censor. The Censor continued for eight numbers carrying Cobbett's usual pro-English views.

The Censor did not, however, allow Cobbett sufficient scope and he began a daily newspaper. This paper was Porcupine's Gazette and Daily Advertiser. He announced it as frankly partisan and continued his biting attacks upon the Democrats, the French, and republican institutions in general. No number lacks arguments favoring a British alliance, and few fail to carry some story of French villainy.

Cobbett's pungent pen was bound to get him into

difficulties sooner or later. One of the leading Democrats of Pennsylvania, Justice Thomas M'Kean, attempted to have him indicted for libel against the Spanish king and his minister to the United States, d'Yrujo. The jury, probably for political reasons, failed to indict Cobbett. M'Kean was not to be denied, however, and placed Cobbett under bonds to keep the peace. Cobbett, unable to remain quiet retorted to this with a withering attack upon M'Kean in a pamphlet called the Republican Judge. The pamphlet denied that there was real freedom of the press in the United States, and condemned all republican institutions in general.

M'Kean continued his efforts to get at Cobbett, and was rewarded by Cobbett's campaign against Dr. Rush, an eminent American physician who was also an ardent patriot and Democrat. Cobbett attacked him with great vigor for his method of treating every conceivable disease, and especially yellow fever which was then raging in Philadelphia, by bleeding. We know now, of course, that Dr. Rush was wrong and that Cobbett was right. But Cobbett did not base his attack on medical arguments, and the reader feels that it was rather the Doctor's political views that were attacked. Dr. Rush brought suit, and was awarded damages of $5,000. Cobbett had already determined to leave Philadelphia and set himself up inNew York, and the outcome of this case led him to do so at once.

In New York he began a new paper called the Rushlight devoted to attacks on Dr. Rush, this time bulstered

with medical arguments. Although the paper was well received, and Cobbett prospered, a great home-sickness had developed in Cobbett for England, for Cobbett had come to believe what he wrote about the perfection of England and English institutions. He left New York in 1800, and sailed for England.

In England, of course, he became a leader of the radical reformers and aided greatly in the securing of the Reform Bill of 1832. This fact would lead us to believe that his American career is not truly indicative of Cobbett. Distance had lent enchantment to everything that was English, home-sickness intensified it, and the attacks upon his beloved fatherland led him into his pro-English, anti-republican course in America against his true nature.

In American his efforts had resulted in a sharpening of party lines and a crystallization of the party movement. His efforts, also, were in a large measure responsible for the early establishment of a party press. It cannot be said that he added anything to the American conception of the liberty of the press.

He had great ability for political writing. Trained by reading Swift, but without Swift's finer subtleties and abilities, Cobbett was more than a match for the average political polemicist. His language was coarse but vigorous. While not as graphic as some writers, there was no doubt left in the mind of the reader as to what Cobbett wished to express.

He was greatly handicapped, however, by his inability

to co-operate with others. Cobbett's whole career gives one an impression of lonesomeness. He was never part of a group, he always stands out clearly, alone, and fiercely independent.

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